Irenicum Magnum:

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THE Gospel-Terms OF COMMUNION STATED.

Offered to the serious Consideration of all Protestants.

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THE

EPISTLE

TO

PROTESTANTS

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THE Communion *of Saints, or their partaking in the ſame* Word, *the ſame* Calling, *the ſame* Warfare, *and the ſame* Hopes, *under the ſame* Lord and Head, *being the Communion of the Univerſal Chriſtian Church; no true Chriſtian reaſonably can reſtrain his Fellowſhip to any particular Church, ſo as to with-hold it from others, who receive the Holy Scripture for their Rule, and profeſs to ſerve God according to the Directions moſt evidently therein contained, as all Proteſtants do. No Proteſtant therefore ought to look upon himſelf as being of a different Communion from other Proteſtants; and it muſt never be his Fault, if others who acknowledge the ſame Rule of Religion, do not either actually live in the ſame Fellowſhip, or reckon themſelves to be all of the ſame Communion.* For they are infallibly Schiſmaticks, who reject from them thoſe whom God rejects not from him. *For that Reaſon, I profeſs to take up no Party of Proteſtants, excluſively to any other which Follows the Proteſtant Grounds; but, as I deſire to be an Univerſal Chriſtian, I would therefore be an Univerſal Proteſtant. Thus I am a Member of the Church of* England, *ſo as to be likewiſe a Member of the whole Proteſtant Church; and all Proteſtants that hold*

the Word of God for the Rule of their Faith, and whose Practice is suitable to the Protestant Principles, I esteem as Brethren, what Nation and Denomination soever they may otherwise be of. If all Protestants would entertain the same Disposition, nothing could hinder them to unite; and certainly they must be so disposed, if they duly observe the Principles of the Reformation. *I address therefore to Protestants the ensuing Treatise, which demonstrates the necessity of this moderate, and truly Catholick, Christian Spirit, and proposes that Method for Union which is necessarily implied* in those Grounds that distinguish the Protestant Church from the Church of *Rome. May every Protestant seriously consider this Matter, and sincerely do his part to procure that happy Union, which will be a security to us against all our Enemies, and will draw God's Blessing upon the Reformation, and make it spread and flourish! This is my hearty Desire, as it ought to be that of every truly reformed Christian.*

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THE PREFACE,

Shewing the Occasion and Design of this Treatise.

WHoever considers the Mischiefs of the many Divisions that Reign among Protestants, cannot but be sensible that the Church of *Rome* doth not without Reason upbraid us with our Dissentions. There is therefore no Sect of Protestants but makes Projects of Union after their own Conceptions, wishing for the Peace and Unity of *Jerusalem*. But most Parties not only seem to over-look the true, and scriptural Way of Union, but they almost universally recur to that very vicious and anti-christian Method, which themselves sometime reprehend in the Church of *Rome*, when they differ with her; which is no fair way of dealing, to play fast and loose, which certainly can bring no honour to the Reformation; so that 'tis indubitably the interest of every Protestant to disclaim it.

The Method that Papists make use of for Union, is this: They suppose in the first place that their Head, or the majority of their Leaders, whom they call the Church Representative, or both jointly, are powerfully and irresistibly mov'd and guided by the Holy Ghost, and thence they conclude that most infallibly they are in the right in whatever they declare ought to be done or believed with relation to Religion;

gion: Founded on this Principle, the Church of *Rome* ordereth and determineth what to them seemeth best, and Magisterially imposeth the same, upon all that are subject to her Jurisdiction, as necessary Terms of Communion, so that she absolutely alloweth none to live in Union with her that submit not intirely to her Decisions and her arbitrary Injunctions.

The Protestants, aiming at Unity, do not indeed profess to be infallible, either in all, or most, or any of their Members. But bating this, which is the Principle the Papists go upon, the most part of Protestants generally follow the Popish Method. They frame divers Terms of Communion, to distinguish their several Sects from one another, barring thereby all others but themselves from their distinct Communions, not contenting themselves with the generality of the Terms of Union presented to us in Scripture. They determine the Latitude of the Scripture to their own particular Judgments, deciding whatever may be controverted, and taking an Authority, that none can allow to another Party, to make such partial Regulations that many who receive the Holy Scripture as well as they, may very sincerely esteem to be disagreeable to God and inconsistent with Religion: In a word, having made Decisions and Determinations after their own Thoughts, they impose 'em on all that will live in Union with them.

Thus if you will join in Communion with a sort of Protestants, you must believe the real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and the Consubstantiation of his very Body and Blood with the Bread and Wine. With some you must actually profess the indispensible necessity of the Baptism of Adult Persons. You shall not be admitted to the Communion of others, if you do not understand some Texts of Scripture to import absolute Predestination and Reprobation, *&c.*

But

But the Moderation of the Church of *England* cannot be too much praiſed, in that ſhe offereth not her Articles to be received as indiſpenſibly neceſſary in themſelves, but as Terms of Peace, being ſo declared to be by the generality of our Divines, (their Interpreters,) as may be ſhewn out of their Writings; whereas moſt other Parties and Sects poſitively impoſe on thoſe that will unite with them, their Regulations and Deciſions, as if they were Certain.

Theſe Deciſions, and this Obſtinacy in making them, and the like, Terms of Communion, is the ſource of all Diviſion and Schiſm. For if they are ſuch as all thoſe that ſincerely adhere to the Holy Scripture cannot receive, then in caſe of Diſagreement, they muſt inevitably divide. This is the Foundation on which the following Treatiſe is built, That all Diviſions among Proteſtants come from their not keeping to *the Latitude of the Scripture*. It is therefore my Deſign to ſhew that as we would all be united, and be clear from the guilt of Diviſion and Schiſm, *we are bound to keep inviolably to the Latitude of Scripture*. This is the Rule that I lay down, and enforce by all Conſiderations able to perſuade. If in any particular I make not a right Application of that Rule, let it be ſhewn and I am ready to yield; for I am convinced, and have ſaid enough to convince others, that the Rule it ſelf is indiſputable, and beyond all doubt is to be received by all thoſe that hold the Word of God for their only Guide, and are deſirous to do their part that at all time there be Unity in the Church, that Controverſies be pacified, and the Truth be ever ſecured.

In the firſt place therefore, I particularly deſcribe and explain what I take to be the neceſſary Way of Union, which I call the Goſpel-Terms of Communion, the *Method of Scripture*, or in ſhort *Scripturaliſm*. Then I urge what Arguments there are for the Reaſonableneſs and Neceſſity of this *Method*. And in the laſt

place, I answer all the Objections that can be framed against it.

Now I am not unaware that divers Persons, according to their several Humours, will censure the following Treatise. Some, first, will dislike the Stile, as not much studied. But it were on many accounts unreasonable, to be too rigid here. This is written popularly, it being necessary that all Persons be versed in this matter; then the Matter is concerning enough to recommend it self. We ought to be content to receive so good a thing as Truth, even when offered us but as it were in earthen Vessels. And if this be fit to persuade the meanest Capacities, it may not be useless to others.

If any quarrel with the word *Scripturalism*, as being an Expression of new stamp, I hope when it is further defined, or the full meaning thereof particularly described, it will be excused and owned to be fit and convenient, by reason it is very significant to our purpose.

Over-nice Criticks, it may be thought, will be offended at some Repetitions in this Treatise. But they may consider that they could not be avoided, and there could be no less in a Discourse of this Nature, seeing that often the same Things which are used for Arguments must serve for Answers, and that the same Reasons answer many Objections, as appears when compared with them, as the same Rule serves to measure several Things, to which for that end it must be applied. It was then absolutely necessary to repeat some Things to answer all Objections, thereby to put what I would establish, out of the reach of Cavil and in its greatest Evidence and Light; and the matter is so important and of so great a Consequence, that it cannot be too much inculcated. Who would think it tedious, if hereby the true Way of Union were discovered and persuaded? We had not

certainly

certainly fallen into ſo many Diſputes, nor broken into ſo many Diviſions, nor been in danger of Hereſies, if this Method, the *Method of Scripture*, had been followed by all Proteſtants at the firſt. There would not have been raiſed Diſſentions as there has been about the Sentiments of Predeſtination, nor the like, if Proteſtants had kept to the Goſpel-Terms of Union. In fine, none, I think, will condemn the Repetitions that may occur in this Treatiſe, if in ſo ſhort a Diſcourſe I have invincibly aſſerted the certain Way of Peace, and of the Preſervation of Truth. It is better to have ſome Books, if they be very uſeful, than not to have them becauſe they are not abſolutely perfect. Some perhaps will find fault with the long Quotations, whether or no always noted as ſuch, that (in their Thoughts) this ſhort Treatiſe is incumbered with. But as herein I have nothing particular from many others, who have done Service to the Publick; ſo I have judged that it might have a good effect to introduce ſome (generally eſteemed by thoſe for whom chiefly I write) exactly ſpeaking my Senſe, that I may not appear alone in my Sentiment. And ſeeing I would have ſaid the ſubſtance of the Things contained in thoſe Quotations, I have concluded that I could do no better than to make uſe of thoſe Words that are excellently fitted to my purpoſe; not contenting my ſelf to refer the Reader, as is ſometime uſual, to the Places cited, becauſe they are ſo material, and Readers ſeldom will be at the trouble to conſult the Paſſages they are referred to, and it may be have not the Books by them.

But it will be ſaid, What need to multiply Books, if as to the Subſtance here is nothing new, but what others have already thought and ſaid before? *Nihil eſt jam dictum, quod non dictum ſit prius.* I confeſs, ſome have in a great meaſure recommended the ſame Method I propoſe for Union, as appears by the Places which

which I quote. But none ever wrote purposedly, that I know of, about it, to establish and defend it as it is here done. Some indeed have said something of it by the by, and perhaps observed some of the Reasons that there are for it: But this matter was not treated methodically nor fully before, nor the Reasons that may be objected against it considered. Here all the Objections against it, and the Arguments for it are collected together, and the Expedient it self, or the Method of Union, is clearly and distinctly represented and explained; so that there may be reason to hope that as it will be more easily understood, so it may more generally be approv'd and receiv'd.

Yet, possibly, some will even take it ill that, writing to Protestants, I chiefly insist throughout my whole Discourse on a Point that seems not disputed by any of them, and wherein, consequently, there lieth no difficulty, that is, That no Person or Persons whatsoever are to make *Magisterial Determinations* and *impose* them on others; for, they will say, there is no Protestant that thinks otherwise, or that ever speaks against this Assertion, so that what I do seems to be much the same as if one went about to prove in general to us that we are not infallible, which our selves grant.

I answer, the difference is very great. For the holding our selves not infallible is a Point of Speculation whose Connexion with the Practice is often somewhat remote, which then may be liable to mistake, tho' certainly that Principle ought in reason to have an influence upon our Actions, consistent with such a Theory: Howbeit if any contradict it at any time in their Practice, that must be shewed them; and that sufficeth, because the Principle is not questioned, and cannot be thought to be disputed in the Theory by those that expressly assert it, notwithstanding their acting contrary to that Tenet, it being possible they see not that they do so.

But

But the holding it either lawful or unlawful for any to make *Magisterial Determinations* and to *impose* them on others, is a Principle that has an expreſs and neceſſary, an immediate and viſible Connexion with the Practice which is to follow from it; for even that Practice is expreſſed in the Principle it ſelf. And therefore if any fail in the Practice, here, they may juſtly be ſuſpected to fail in the Theory too, and to need to be better informed in their Speculation, as not being well grounded or not ſtedfaſt in it; ſo that it would not ſuffice in this caſe to repreſent to them that their Actions do not ſuit with ſuch a Principle, becauſe that is palpable, they cannot but ſee it themſelves, and conſequently the miſtake muſt neceſſarily be about the Principle it ſelf.

I am then, I muſt confeſs, very far from believing that all Proteſtants are really perſuaded that 'tis not lawful to make *Magiſterial Determinations* and to *impoſe* them on others, ſeeing that they generally do both, and that is actually the cauſe of all the Miſchief, all the Diviſion, Schiſm and Animoſity among them; whereas if they took a contrary Method, they might be united, notwithſtanding all their Differences, as may be ſhewn in every particular. Things being ſo, it muſt then be acknowledged that it is of the greateſt importance and neceſſity to perſuade firmly to Proteſtants the common and indiſpenſible Obligation of following the Method which excludes *Magiſterial Determinations* and *Impoſitions*. Not but that (I readily grant) the Proteſtant Principles certainly imply this Method, and condemn *Impoſitions* and *Determinations*, as was obſerved: But in ſumm, if the greateſt part of Proteſtants not only ſeem not to ſee it, but actually deny it by their Actions, as I ſaid, it is very fit to lay before them their Principles, and ſhew what they ought to do to act agreeably to them; which doing they will be better united, and

upon

upon better grounds than the Church of *Rome*, seeing the Center of their Union will be *the Word of God*, whereas that of the Papists is only built on the tyrannical Impositions of Men. I assure my self therefore that as no Protestant can oppose the *Scriptural Method of Union* without expressly renouncing the Principles of the Reformation, so no Papist will ever be able to say any thing reasonable to overthrow it.

However, the generality of Men, thro' their own fault, have so accustomed themselves to go wrong, that they usually run all sides imaginable of a Proposition, and take hold of any handle about it before they hit upon that which is the right; and in the mean time they are unjust towards those from whom they differ, and they put themselves in danger of never doing right to the Truth, thus running the greatest of Hazards, and of being the Authors of the greatest Mischief. All which they are wilfully guilty of, being rash and hasty in their Judgments. Men generally are proud and conceited. It doth not so much as enter into their Thoughts that they may be mistaken. They easily take it for granted that they are in the right. And when they are so prepossessed, nothing can be Truth to them but that which they hold; their Prejudices make them over-look the Strength and Evidence of all that can be said against their Opinions; and their only aim is to baffle and tread upon their Adversaries. Thus Men often resist and oppress others, when actually they have not weighed the Tenth part of what is to be considered of their side, and perhaps understand nothing perfectly of the Question; hazarding with the boldest Temerity possible to crush the Truth, to fight against God, and crucifie Christ anew. To that height of mischief and impiety doth Rashness and Passion lead Men!

It

It is no wonder that with such a Disposition Men run into Error: God never designed, *that, in the dark, they should luckily stumble upon the Truth.*

Indeed, every sincere and pious Person may with God's Grace discern his Duty. But then a Man ought not to be wanting to himself.

Eternal Salvation is of such vast moment, that no careless Persons can be thought worthy of it: It is justly esteemed to deserve our best Consideration.

If we will act therefore as we ought to do in a matter of this Consequence, that we may have nothing wherewith to reproach our selves, and to answer for before Almighty God; we are to take all the care possible that we be not mis-informed, and that we mistake not thro' our fault or neglect. For if we do so, we shall be inexcusable. We must not then altogether hearken to our own Sentiments, (as is so usual,) and only consult our own Conceptions: But certainly if we will not run into the very same guilty Disposition of those that crucified our Saviour, we must carefully weigh and examine Things, and thoroughly consider both what may be said against our Opinions, and what may be urged for the Opinions of others.

Truth stands in it self, upon a firm and solid Basis, and has no need of implicit Faith or any base means to support it. It's Light is so diffusive and clear, that if any Men will attend carefully and impartially to it, without Passion and Prejudice, the least shew or opening thereof will suffice to direct them. But their Duty, then, is to take hold of that Clew, and with it to try whether 'twill lead them out of the Windings and dark Recesses of Error, and bring them to a shining and unquestionable Light.

But few Men are in such Dispositions indispensibly necessary for the effectual Search and glorious Discovery of Light. They are (for the most part) and will be

be partial; and they do not ſo far intereſs themſelves in the Truth, as to be willing to be at much Pains for the certain and ſincere Knowledge thereof: They uſually therefore content themſelves with appearances of Reaſon, and make haſte to ſhew themſelves outwardly and unreaſonably zealous for their Party and Opinions, whatever they are. And thus they become *wiſe in their own Conceits*, ſtiff, and fierce, and abſolutely impatient of Contradiction.

That we may not be guilty of the ſame dangerous and untoward Method, let us, when we have repreſented our Reaſons, calmly hear what others can ſay againſt us; let us meekly and patiently anſwer them, and in God's Name let the Truth have its courſe, and the beſt Reaſon prevail and freely be yielded unto.

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THE Gospel-TERMS OF COMMUNION, &c.

CHAP. I.

A Description of the Method of Scripture, *or the* Gospel-Terms of Communion.

THE *Gospel-Terms of Communion*, or the *Method of Scripture*, is what, for brevity-sake, we shall also call *Scripturalism*, as hath been observed in the Preface. This Method, in sum, consists in receiving the Holy Scripture as *A Compleat and Perfect Rule*, and *acting consistently* to this Principle, in regulating Terms of Communion.

So that hereby it is held, in the first place, That the *Bible* fully containeth whatsoever is necessary to Salvation; and that what is necessary to Salvation is so evident in the Holy Scriptures, that it

may therein ſufficiently be diſcerned and underſtood by Perſons of the meaneſt Capacities.

Which, on the one Hand, doth not import that there is no need of Conſideration, and other Means and Helps to underſtand and diſcern certainly what is taught in Scripture; nor, on the other, can ſignifie that ſome Men, pretending to have diſcovered the certain and true meaning of Scripture, may impoſe their Senſe upon Others.

But the Terms of Union agreeable to this Principle, That the Scripture is the Compleat and Perfect Rule of Chriſtians, import this Method, which is the *Method of Scripture:*

Firſt, To commit to fit Perſons the Office of Miniſters, and the care of Diſcourſing in Publick out of the Scriptures, to make (as much as is poſſible and needful) the Things that are taught therein appear more and more plain, and in the beſt methodical Order, to the Underſtanding of the meaneſt Capacities; that ſuch may be better able to judge of, and diſcern all neceſſary Truths;

Secondly, To allow to every Particular the priviledge of judging for himſelf.

In the firſt of theſe Points, theſe two ought to be taken to be implied, *viz.*

I. To inſiſt chiefly, in popular Diſcourſes, on thoſe Things that are the plaineſt and leaſt ſubject to Controverſie;

II. When Controverted Matters are to be treated of, to repreſent the beſt Reaſons on all ſides impartially, not going about to impoſe upon the Hearers, but freely leaving them to their own Judgment, (after a fair and ſincere Repreſentation of the Things in themſelves,) as is moſt expreſly implied in the other Rule, which hath theſe Three Branches.

1. When

1. When we require an account of the Faith of others, To require indiſpenſibly no more of them than that they expreſs it in the Terms of Scripture: And, in all other Terms of Communion, and all Regulations, to keep to *The Latitude of Scripture*, (or to the generality of all the Senſes it is capable of, without excluding any one,) that thoſe that receive the Scripture for their Rule may Unite therein, that no Man's Judgment be in any manner captivated or violenced;

2. To take care, on the other ſide, not to abuſe our Liberty in judging for our ſelves, in doing it raſhly and injudiciouſly, but to judge with Moderation and Sobriety, and with all the Caution poſſible not to err; And,

3. Not to make a Buſtle about our particular Sentiments, as if we pretended Magiſterially to obtrude them on others; nor to be Arrogant, Preſumptuous, nor Indiſcreet in maintaining them, but to be willing generally to make a Profeſſion of them in the Terms of Scripture, bearing with thoſe that differ from us, if they own the Authority of the Scripture as well as we, and likewiſe keep within its Terms.

By this Method, in ſhort, no one ſets up his own Judgment as the Rule of Union, but all are equally tied to ſuch Terms as are Scriptural; beſide the Conformity of which to the Word of God, this may be termed the *Method of Scripture*, for theſe Reaſons, it being conſiſtent with all the probable Senſes of the Text, and no other thing but Scripture being taken for the *Means of Unity*.

CHAP. II.

The firſt Argument for our Method of Union, Scripturaliſm.

THIS, as we have deſcribed it, is *Scripturaliſm*, or the *Terms of Union* expreſly founded upon *Scripture*. *Scripture* it ſelf being thoſe very *Terms* whereby we muſt be *United*, and the *Method of Scripture* importing, as we have ſhewn, *The Method of Union according to Scripture*, or *The Method of taking Scripture for Terms of Union*. Now the Reaſonableneſs of this *Method* I urge by theſe following Arguments:

Firſt, Becauſe there is no other Juſt nor Reaſonable Means of Union, nor conſequently any other agreeable to Chriſtianity, than this.

Secondly, Becauſe this is agreeable to the Principles of *Proteſtants*.

Thirdly, Becauſe it will, in its own Nature, effect that good End, which all Chriſtians ſome way or other aim at, or ought to aim at, *viz.* the Reſtoring *Peace* to *Chriſtendom*, and *Uniting* thoſe that hold the *Scripture* for the *Rule* of their Faith.

Fourthly, Becauſe this Method is the beſt ſecurity for the *Truth* at all times.

Fifthly, Becauſe in it ſelf it is Juſt, Pious and Rational.

Sixthly, Becauſe it is agreeable to the expreſs Injunctions and Oracles of the *Word of God*.

I. I prove the Reaſonableneſs of the *Method of Scripture* by this Argument, becauſe there is no other Juſt nor Reaſonable Method of Union, nor conſequently any other agreeable to Chriſtianity, than this. Now if this be rejected, there can remain but theſe two; The way

way of Perſuaſion by Diſputation, or the way of Conſtraint by ſetting up of Human Authority; the firſt of which is here improper, and the ſecond unwarrantable.

1. As for Diſputation. It will, evidently, never produce any thing elſe but it ſelf, and will but immortalize Differences, when the Diſpute is about ſeveral Points eſpecially; ſo that thoſe that ſhould follow this Method, inſtead of Uniting, would but wrangle to Eternity. For there have ever been Differences of Opinion, and Men will ever judge variouſly of intricate and difficult Matters.

In it ſelf, one would think that Diſputing were the certain way to diſcuſs Things, expoſe Error, and make the Truth appear; in Reaſon it ought to be ſo. But as Men are made, that will never be the Effect of it. For it is not one time in a thouſand, that Men Diſpute without Prejudice. And ſo, we ſee experimentally that after all the Diſputes that have been in the World, the old Errors are retained ſtill.

If we have not Diſputed long enough, but muſt ſtill go on, when will be the end; and what will become of Chriſtian Peace and Unity in the mean time; upon what bottom muſt that be ſet, till all Controverſies be agreed? After all, all Controverſies will never be ſo agreed, but that Men will differ in their Judgment in many Things. By what is paſt we may judge that it cannot be otherwiſe. And ſeeing it cannot be helped, it is a ſign that it is *no Matter of Moment, and that that need hinder no Buſineſs.*

To Diſpute, is but to alledge Proofs and Reaſons for what we advance: Now, whatever be the Cauſe, it is plain by Experience, That Men judge of the ſame Reaſons differently every Day. What Ground is there then to expect that Diſputing will ever produce Unity, ſo as to make Men to be of the ſame Opinion in all Things? If we muſt ſtay till then, before we Unite,

we may despair of ever seeing any Union among us. We may be morally certain it will never be the fruit of Disputes, seeing so many Disputes have not one jot advanced that Work.

If by all the Disputes that have been agitated hitherto, it hath not been possible to persuade all Christians to agree in any one Point that was Controverted; if it be even so difficult to reconcile most of them that profess Christianity but to the just generality of the Terms of Union, to which their own Principles and their own Rule lead them, that the greatest Motive to go about it be the desire of discharging one's Conscience, and the satisfaction of having done one's Duty; what hopes can there be that ever Men shall be Disputed into a right Belief in all Particulars?

If you Dispute equitably, when you have said all you can, you must intirely leave your Reasons to the Judgment of those you argue with, without indirectly Extorting any manner of ways a forced Assent. But most ordinarily you may urge Reason and Scripture till your Heart ake; For the most part you shall have Scripture and Reason urged again to you. So it is; so it hath been; so it will be.

Then, if you will not be content to unite in those Things in which you already agree, namely, the express Terms of Scripture, there never will be any Union, and you will be the Authors of nothing but Confusion and Disorder. For tho' arguing about a Subject, and carefully examining it, be necessary to discover its Truth and Certainty; yet seeing the same Arguments do not persuade all Men alike, we cannot reasonably expect, as was observed, that Disputing should Unite all Men in the same Opinions in all Particulars, nor consequently that such an Agreement should be necessary in order to Union.

Those then, evidently, are equally partial and inconsiderate, who say that the keeping to the Words and gene-

generality of Scripture ſignifies nothing to a Chriſtian Union, but that it is the Senſe of thoſe Words we muſt all exactly have, before we can Unite. For in ſhort, I demand, is Union a Chriſtian Duty? If it be; and if it muſt conſiſt, as they pretend, in an agreeing in the Senſe of all Points of Scripture; I ask which way muſt this be effected, and by what means may differing Chriſtians come all to agree ſo luckily? We have ſufficiently ſeen we muſt not hope that from Diſputes. For how few Men Diſpute ſincerely! And if Men be never ſo Sincere, doth Sincerity make them perfectly infallible? If not, aſſuredly they may differ, and miſtake, in ſome Things ſtill, tho' very ſincerely. And thus with all the Sincerity imaginable Men ſhall not be able to do their Duty, and ſhall never be Happy; which, without Controverſie, is a moſt horrid Aſſertion, and is moſt evidently contrary to the Revelations given us of God. For then we ſhould not be under a ſtate of Grace, or a mild Diſpenſation, but under the hardeſt Terms poſſible. Conclude we then hitherto, that *Scripturaliſm* is the reaſonableſt Method of Union that yet appears.

CHAP. III.

The Continuation of the firſt Argument. A Confutation of the firſt Pretence to the Authority of Magiſterially Determining Matters of Religion, and impoſing the ſaid Determinations on others.

THERE remains no other Method, in oppoſition to *Scripturaliſm*, but the ſetting up of Human Authority to be the Rule and Means of Union. But

can any of those that are generally called *Protestants* take this Party, or favour this Expedient? Is not this directly opposite to their Principles, and their Plea for the with-drawing of their Necks from the Papal Yoke?

Have not *Protestants* unanimously declared against the being of any such thing as *Infallibility* upon Earth? Have they not shewn positively that those that pretended to it, were far from being infallible?

Now is not *Infallibility* the only warrantable Grounds of Magisterial *Authority* in Matters of Religion? Those then who confute *Infallibility* being granted to any Man, or Company of Men, do they not evince that no Human Authority is Magisterially to decide of Controversies, nor consequently to appoint necessary Terms of Union beside the Express Word of God? For whatever Terms are appointed besides, must be so by the Magisterial Determination of some Man, or Company of Men, who it is evident have no real Authority so to do, not being infallible: It follows therefore, That no Man has Right to propose any other Terms of Union than *Scripturalism*.

But tho' *Infallibility* be the only just Title to the Prerogative of Determining Magisterially Religious Matters; yet, it seems, others than *Papists* are apt (whether or no they be aware of it,) to assume that Right to themselves, from other Grounds than that of *Infallibility*. And they seem to take upon them that Authority of Deciding, and imposing on others what Terms of Union they judge best, from one or more of these four Principles: Either that *Those who excel in Knowledge and Learning* ought to have that Priviledge; or that that Right belongs to *Those that are in Office in the Church*; or at least to *Those that have Antiquity and the Truth*; or that it belongs even to *Them who have the Number, Force and Power of their side*. But, if it be observed, are not these Grounds vain and unwarrantable?

As

As to the firſt; God can never have given ſuch an uncertain and confuſed Order as this, That the moſt Learned, and thoſe that excel in Knowledge, ſhall have the Prerogative to Determine, and impoſe what Terms of Union they judge beſt, to which all Chriſtians muſt ſubmit. For, *Firſt*, That Rule would be of no uſe, and would occaſion nothing but Confuſion; *Secondly*, It would be no true Meaſure to walk by.

I. That Rule would be of no uſe, and would occaſion nothing but Confuſion. For every one may have, and actually hath, a good Opinion of his own Senſe and Knowledge. Who then ſhall judge which is the moſt knowing, or who hath the trueſt Learning? Thou pretendeſt that thou excelleſt; another pretendeth it is he that doth ſo. If thy good Opinion of thy ſelf makes thee go about to impoſe any thing upon him; by the ſame Principle his Conceit, That he has the beſt Reaſon and the greateſt Inſight in the Things in queſtion, will move him to make the like Attempts upon thy Liberty, and preſcribe the quite contrary to what thou enjoyneſt. And why ſhould'ſt thou have the priviledge to prefer and magnifie thy Skill, more than he his?

If thou ſay'ſt, That as the trueſt Learning muſt carry it, ſo by the beſt Reaſons, and the greateſt Evidence, it muſt appear where it is; this is, to put the Matter to an Iſſue by the way of Diſpute, which is endleſs and ineffectual: So that generally thou wilt, after all, remain of thy Opinion, and he of his, as by Experience we ſee it is uſual. And what will this produce but Confuſion, and multiplicity of Schiſms?

Thou wilt urge, That neither thou nor he muſt decide of either of your Excellencies, or judge of your Reaſons, but that it muſt be done by others. I anſwer, in all probability thou wilt meet ſome that will ſide with thee, and he ſome that will ſide with him. Many will be for themſelves: And where then will be the Unity?

But

But let the greateſt Number take thy part: Is that a certain Demonſtration of thy Merit? Doth now Number make Things good; Is that the Opinion of *Proteſtants*; Have they not rather often expoſed it? This Obſervation we ſhall have occaſion to make uſe of further, by and by. Howbeit,

II. Suppoſe thy ſelf to be in general the moſt Learned: Muſt thou therefore bear the ſway, and decide of Things as thou thinkeſt beſt; Is that in good deed a ſure *Meaſure* to go by; Wilt thou, with all thy Learning, be an infallible Rule which other Men muſt ſubmit to; And are thy Conceptions and thy Determinations the Things in which all Chriſtians muſt Unite, by reaſon of thy Learning, and may ſo do with all ſafety and aſſurance, that in being guided by thee, and ſticking to thee, they ſhall not be miſled?

" Let God be true, and every Man acknowledged " falſe. That is to ſay, God alone is infallible; and every Man, how Learned ſoever, is ſubject to Error.

But it may be, altho' in it ſelf Learning doth not render Men infallible; yet in all probability God will always chuſe the moſt Learned to inſpire them with His unerring Spirit, the Spirit of Wiſdom? Hear what ſaith the Scripture.

" The Wiſdom of this World is fooliſhneſs with " God; for it is written, He taketh the Wiſe in their " own Craftineſs. And again, the Lord knoweth the " Thoughts of the Wiſe, that they are vain. 1 *Cor.* 3. 19, 20.

" Knowledge puffeth up. And by Pride cometh " Contention. 1 *Cor.* 8. 1. *Prov.* 13. 10.

" I will deſtroy the Wiſdom of the Wiſe, and will " bring to nothing the Underſtanding of the Prudent. " Where is the Wiſe? Where is the Scribe? Where " is the Diſputer of this World? Hath not God made " fooliſh the Wiſdom of this World? 1 *Cor.* 1. 19, 20.

" God

" God has chosen the foolish Things of the World, to confound the Wise: And God has chosen the weak Things of the World, to confound Things which are mighty; and base Things of the World, and Things which are despised hath God chosen: Yea, and Things which are not, to bring to nought Things that are. 1 *Cor.* 1. 27, 28.

" Because the foolishness of God is wiser than Men, and the weakness of God is stronger than Men. 1 *Cor.* 1. 25.

" And Jesus said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy Sight. *Matt.* 11. 25, 26.

" Thus ye see your Calling, Brethren, how that not many Wise Men after the Flesh, not many Mighty, not many Noble are called. 1 *Cor.* 1. 26.

God loveth to humble the Haughtiness of Men, and o expose their Vanity. His Gifts are in His own ower. His Independency, His Wisdom and Might re equally Infinite. Out of the refuse and off-scour- g of the World He is able to raise Children to *braham.*

Often the less knowing have Qualities and Dispo- ions which incline God to prefer them before the ore Learned. And possibly by the nature of the ing, the more Learned may err where the less know- g shall not. For the Mind of Man is finite. No an can know every Thing. And ordinarily the more nowing one is in a great many Things, the more ill or ridiculously Mistaken and Ignorant he is in ose Things he is not well versed in. His Soul is as were full with those Things he has chiefly meditated on; and other Considerations that have been out of s road, often find no room there, nor any Disposition Spirit for their Entertainment.

In

In ſhort, the moſt Ignorant may certainly know ſomething, which the moſt Learned may be ignorant of. And it may be, he that hath little or no Learning, has well weighed and conſidered a Thing which he that is more Learned in many Particulars has overlooked and neglected, hath not thought good, neither has been willing to be at the Pains to inform himſelf rightly in; And therefore the Learned Man judgeth of that Thing like a Fool, whilſt he that is otherwiſe leſs Learned judgeth judiciouſly of it.

Some Errors proceed chiefly from the Corruption of the Will, when the Matter is about ſomething of difficult Practice, and unpleaſing to Fleſh and Blood. Then Vicious Men, whatever it coſt them, are reſolved not to come to the Light; as it is, *John* 3. 20. And the moſt Learned may be of that ſort. For the moſt Learned are not always the beſt Men. This Aſſertion is nothing but what is confirmed by Experience. Did not the moſt Learned among the Jews ask this Queſtion, "Have any of the Rulers, or of the Phariſees "believed on him? *John* 7. 48. And whom doth Our Saviour call Hypocrites, but the Prieſts, the Lawyers, the Scribes and Phariſees, who no doubt were the moſt Learned in their Generation, and who ſhould have been likewiſe the moſt ſincerely and judiciouſly zealous in the inquiries of Religion; but ſo, it ſeems, they were not, notwithſtanding all their pretences and outward ſhew?

The Learned are generally intereſſed in the World, and ſo, generally awed, more than others, by worldly Fears, and biaſſed by worldly Deſigns; therefore they appear ſeldom for the right Cauſe, but when it is protected by a ſufficient number of Followers, except the couragious and conſtant Sufferings of others ſometime put a Heart into ſome of them, and conſtrain them, as it were, by the powerful Motive of ſo heroick Examples, to give Glory to God. But thoſe whoſe Eru-

dition

dition is not of ſo vaſt Extent, but have made the Will of God their chief Study and Delight, will prove to be that good Ground that is rightly prepared for the Heavenly Seed. Being diſpoſed to fear and obey God, they will certainly come to the Light: Their Deſigns and Actions being Vertuous and Good, they will not be afraid to know perfectly the whole Will of God; by what they know already being perſuaded, thro' His Grace, to do it all to the beſt of their Power. Which is the meaning of the 21ſt Verſe of the 3d Ch. of St. *John*. " He that doth Truth, (or acteth ſincerely, and " in the fear of God,) cometh to the Light, that his " Deeds may be made manifeſt, that they are wrought " in God. The Light of Conſcience, and withal the glorious and ſhining Light of Scripture is more to them, than to others all the Learning in the World, and actually fits and diſpoſes them more than the greateſt Learning for the Reception of the Truth of God.

Not that Learning is to be ſlighted. That were to run into another Extream. We muſt, particularly, ſtudy and underſtand a Subject, before we can rightly judge of it. But 'tis evident, That the Fear of the Lord is the beginning of all Religious Knowledge, and the trueſt and moſt neceſſary Wiſdom, certainly qualifying Men for a free and careful ſearch after Truth, and a ſincere, tho' modeſt Profeſſion of it. As it is, *Pſalm.* 25. 14. and *Prov.* 3. 32. " The Secret of " the Lord is with them that fear Him. His Secret is " with the Righteous.

It is then plain, That ſince Learning may be without Vertue and a good Conſcience, ſo it may be without a right Faith and the Knowledge of the Truth. And yet it is not the Scriptures fault that Men do not take the true Senſe of them, in Things Eſſential. But as we have ſaid, Men ſometimes have different Luſts and Intereſts to ſerve; and their different Luſts and Intereſts

Interests make them force the Scripture to side with them. Sometimes meer humane Weaknesses and Prejudices, tho' the Men seem sincere and endowed with excellent Abilities, cause the same Effect, at least for a time.

But in short, I shall conclude this Point with the Words of a judicious Writer to this purpose. * " If the Learned are as " free from Prejudice, Pride, Vain- " glory, Covetousness, and other " Evil Affections, which darken " Men's Minds, it is more likely " they should make the Discovery of the Truth than " the Vulgar; if not, the Vulgar are better qualified " to make it than they: For tho' Learning, when " joined with a sincere Love of the Truth, is a great " advantage for the discovery of it, yet when destitute " of this, it is as great a hinderance.

* " The Peo- " ple's Right to " read the Holy " Scripture, P. 83.

And (in fine) when all is done, Learning, as we have seen, doth not make Men infallible. It were therefore a huge piece of madness to make the Dictates of Learned Men the Rule of Unity, to which all should submit; or to allow them the Prerogative at their Pleasure to Regulate Terms of Union, and Magisterially to determine what particular Points must be received or rejected.

CHAP

CHAP. IV.

The Confutation of the ſecond Pretence to Magiſterial Authority.

THE ſecond Pretence to Magiſterial Authority is not better grounded than the firſt. For if thoſe who bear Office in the Church (under any Denomination, and in any Circumſtance whatſoever,) have right to impoſe other Terms of Union than *Scripturaliſm*; they muſt have it either, firſt, becauſe God has declared they ought to have it, or becauſe they are infallible, or in fine, becauſe there is a neceſſity in the nature of the Thing that they ſhould have that Priviledge: But now it is certain there's none of thoſe Reaſons, why the Miniſters of the Church ſhould have that Right that is here pretended to: It follows therefore that they have it not.

As to the firſt; it is plain God has no where declared that they ought to have ſuch a Priviledge. "Thou art *Peter*; upon this Rock I will build my "Church, and the Gates of Hell ſhall not prevail a-"gainſt it: I give unto thee the Keys of the "Kingdom of Heaven; whatſoever thou ſhalt bind "on Earth ſhall be bound in Heaven: Where two or "three are Aſſembled together in my Name, there I "will be in the midſt of them; and the like pretended Authorities for this Point, have been over and over, unanſwerably, proved by *Proteſtant* Writers to have no ſuch meaning as to aſcribe to any Eccleſiaſticks the Right of impoſing what Terms of Union, and what Decrees they pleaſe. I need not therefore now enter upon the particular Diſcuſſion of any of thoſe places.

Secondly,

Secondly, Thoſe that bear Office in the Church are not infallible. For, that they may fail, and have actually failed, hath been often proved by Experience. They cannot therefore, no more than other Men, challenge the priviledge of determining Controverſies, and impoſing what Terms of Union they pleaſe, on the account of Infallibility.

Thirdly, And laſtly, There is no reaſon *in the nature of the Thing*, that thoſe that bear Office in the Church ſhould have Authority to decide, and regulate what Terms of Union they judge beſt; ſeeing we have the Word of God for our Rule, as all Chriſtians acknowledge, and it would be an infinite Diſparagement to that Sacred Word, if it was ſuppoſed to be an inſufficient and imperfect Rule, and if fallible Men were eſteemed more fit and more ſure Guides than it.

To alledge here any Example that the Church Miniſters have determined Controverſies, and impoſed on others their Comments and Deciſions, and regulated other Terms of Union than what are meant and implied by *Scripturaliſm*; is nothing to the purpoſe, and doth not prove that they have that Right. But it is evident they have no ſuch Authority, in as much as they are fallible. Therefore they ought to keep to the Terms of *Scripturaliſm*, if they will not be guilty of ſuch a high Preſumption, as if they pretended to be wiſer than the Holy Spirit of God, and will not run the hazard of involving themſelves and others remedileſly into Error, without leaving a poſſibility of being retrieved from it; as is happened in *Turkey*, and even in many places among Chriſtians, where the Eccleſiaſticks decide all Matters of Religion, impoſe what Terms of Union they judge beſt, and no Body is ſuffered to contradict them, whatever they do.

It were then very unreaſonable to aſcribe to the Church Governours the right Magiſterially to determine, and to impoſe other Terms of Union than ſuch

as

as are certainly *Scriptural*. Thoſe that made uſe of ſuch an arbitrary Authority never did any good with it, but might certainly have done a great deal of Miſchief. And generally *Councils* have cauſed more Confuſion, than they have remedied Evils; according to the obſervation of St. *Gregory Nazianzen*. " *Nullius Concilii finem lætum fauſtumque vidi, nec quod depulſionem malorum potius quam acceſſionem & incrementum habuerit.* Greg. Nazianz. Epiſt. ad Procop. And ſo it became a common Saying, *Omne Concilium parit bellum.* Thus, after the moſt famous determining Synod held among Proteſtants, what but this was the reſult of it? *Synodus tandem habita eſt. Sed quis ex parte contraria ejus ſe auctoritate permoveri paſſus eſt ad errores ſuos deſerendum, & veritatem Dei ſincero corde amplectendum?* Certainly no good can juſtly be expected from means not warranted by God.

CHAP. V.

The Confutation of the third Pretence to Magiſterial Authority.

BUT may not the right of making Magiſterial Determinations, belong to thoſe that have Antiquity for them and, conſequently, the Truth? Ay; but who are thoſe? That Queſtion is harder probably to be decided than the former, *Who is the beſt Learned*; which nevertheleſs we have ſeen to be difficult enough. By other Inſtances of Literature one may poſſibly in ſome meaſure gueſs at a Man's skill in the Buſineſs that is then in Agitation; and in general his Ignorance or Learning may appear by many Tokens; (tho' after all if a Man be Learned, he is Learned for himſelf, and

his Learning doth not ſubject others to his Judgment:) But, here, who indeed ſhall reſolve, who it is that actually has the Truth and Antiquity for him? Let who will determine; none will acquieſce in it, or ſubmit to that pretended Authority, but every one will judge for himſelf. And that is very natural and reaſonable.

For if it be conſidered, what right haſt thou to aſcribe the Truth to thee more than another Man to aſcribe it to himſelf? Thou verily believeſt that that is the very Truth that thou holdeſt; and doth not he believe the ſame of himſelf? Thou lay'ſt claim to Antiquity, ſo doth he.

But doth he not walk the ſafer that prefers and inviolably ſticks to the certainly true and only infallible, the truly primitive and apoſtolick Antiquity? What wilt thou make of all the Antiquity beſides, that is leſs ancient than that, when thou haſt made ſo much buſtle as is uſual about it? Wilt thou take it as a ſure and certain Rule, by which we muſt all unite? It is ordinarily ſaid that they that lived in thoſe Times were able to judge better of Things than we; ſo that one would think the concluſion would be that they have actually judged as they ſhould. Shall we then implicitely ſubmit to their Judgment? But did not ſome of them hold ſome Things which we abſolutely eſteem to be Errours? And if their Authority is not valid to perſuade thee to ſubmit to them in theſe; upon what account muſt their Judgment be deciſive in other Things, in which tho' thou believeſt they hit right, another may think they might be again miſtaken? For certainly he that Errs once, may Err again. Either therefore ſubmit to their Judgment in all Things, and ſay they could not Err, or elſe let their Judgment be no Rule to us; and ſo ſpare thy ſelf and others the labour of unvailing their Expreſſions, and diſputing about

about their Opinions, which after all may favour others more than thee.

Indeed about Things in which they could not be miſtaken, and it is credible they were not of a Humour to deceive; their Teſtimony is of great Weight: As in Matters of Fact. For inſtance, thoſe that tell us they had ſeen the Apoſtles and apoſtolical Men, and had ſeen them work Wonders able to convince any rational and conſidering Perſons; this Aſſertion, and alſo this Judgment of theirs is perſuaſive, becauſe firſt, they could not here be miſtaken, but certainly knew whether it was true or falſe; and then, Secondly, becauſe we have alſo ſufficient evidence of their Faithfulneſs, and of their really declaring the Truth in this (to them known) Matter; for they convincingly acted as Men themſelves thoroughly perſuaded of that, of which they could not have been perſuaded if it was not certain. They ſhewed in good earneſt that they had found the Miracles of the Apoſtles perſuaſive, their whole Lives and Actions being influenced by that perſuaſion, ſo as thereby to be moved to forſake all the Pleaſures of this Life, to embrace and profeſs a new, an auſtere and perſecuted Religion, and finally for the profeſſion thereof to ſuffer Torments and Death. Theſe were ſure Marks that they were abundantly informed in thoſe Matters, of the certainty of which they had ſo many Means and Opportunities, and ſo much Reaſon rightly and infallibly to inform themſelves, that they could not poſſibly be miſtaken therein, nor conſequently deceive us. Their Judgment therefore herein, backt with ſo much Strength and Evidence, is undeniably to be approved and received, and cannot be reſiſted without oppoſing all the Reaſon in the World.

But tho' they had ſuch ſecurity againſt the poſſibility of erring in this Matter, it doth not follow that they could never err, or that they could not be miſtaken in ſome other Caſes where poſſibly they had not the

like Information. And if they have made their Conjectures of their own, their Speculation and Judgment is no more to be relied on than that of other Men. For like other Men they were subject to mistake.

To think that because they were near the Apostles time it is not so probable that they could Err, is a false and sophistical way of reasoning. Do we not see recorded in Scripture Errors in the very time of the Apostles? "Some would be of *Paul*, and some of "*Apollos*," 1 Cor. 1. 12. Some believed that they might "Eat all Things; and others would Eat nothing but "Herbs." *Rom.* 14. 2. We may then conclude that notwithstanding the Proximity to the apostolical Times, Men would have, and actually had Conceptions and Conceits of their own.

Moreover, if many that have written, whose Writings are not extant, are supposed by all to have erred in those primitive Times; what reason is there to take those whose Writings appear, to be more infallible or less capable of Erring? Is it because their Writings have met with Applause, and they have had the greater number of Admirers? That would be to make Success the mark of Merit, and to judge of the Cause by the number of its Followers; which way of arguing as it is not approved by Protestants, *so neither was it allowed of by the primitive Christians in their Disputes with the Heathens.*

But if those ancient Doctors, whose Works are still extant, are only esteemed upon the account of the Reasons that are to be found in their Books; it is then to be observed:

First, That it may be, in some particulars those cannot so well be judged of, not having now, nor knowing perfectly the Reasons of their Contemporaries whom they oppose, whose Writings have been suppressed.

Secondly,

Secondly, If the Reaſons which the ancient Fathers make uſe of are the inducement why we are to follow them, and be of their Opinion; then their Authority is hereby acknowledged to be *null* and inſignificant, and muſt now be laid aſide and never more talk'd of; but what remains to do is only to conſider of the ſaid Reaſons in themſelves, which are neither the better nor worſe for having been made uſe of by ſuch and ſuch Men.

And ſo we ſhall not need to concern our ſelves what was the Judgment of this or that Father, nor prolong any more Diſputes to ſhew that their Expreſſions agree with our Opinions, or diſagree with the Opinions of others. Let that be as it will: What is it to the certainty of the Truth? Are we to be led by the Thoughts of other Men, or only to believe good Reaſons and ſubſtantial Proofs? If only the latter, then why do we go about before we come to the Point? Why do we not go directly to it? Wherefore do we intangle our ſelves with the Authorities of Men whom we mean not to make our Rule, and to whom we allow no ſuch Authority?

To make ſhort; Let us conſider the Reaſons there are for a Thing, or that are againſt it. Let us not blindly ſubmit, in Matters of Religion, to any Man, who is certainly fallible. And howſoever any one may pretend it is he that holds the Truth, let us never the more truſt him, but let us carefully examine the Reaſons and Grounds of Things, and ever let us believe that which appears moſt credible and beſt grounded. *

Some Men ſeem not to be againſt examining; yet they

* *Nec ego hujus auctoritate, nec tu illius dijudicari, Scripturarum auctoritatibus, non quorumcunque propriis, ſed utriſque communibus teſtibus, res cum re, cauſa cum cauſa, ratio cum ratione concertet.* Auguſt. adverſus Maximinum. Lib. 3. Cap. 14.

withal hold still to this Foundation of their own, that those that have the Truth ought to be believed and submitted unto: And taking for certain (as every one doth) that what they believe is certainly the Truth, they conclude that they have the Right to determine what must or must not be believed, and so, indispensably, (as much as they can) require and enjoyn every one to receive and consent to what they have determined, tho' at the same time they bid you examine it.

They are content you should examine as much as you please, so you but submit to their Judgment. Nay, they tell you it is really their Will and Design that you should examine; they exhort you to it, and declare it is your Duty; tho' when all is done, they hold your Duty still is absolutely to believe as they do.

Nevertheless they tell you, they are not infallible; their Words are not to be received as Oracles; nothing must be believed but what agrees with the *Word of God*; and it is not for any Authority of their own that you must submit to them, but for the Truth's sake which they have. But who sees not that this is a pitiful *Petitio Principii*, a shameful begging of the Question, and taking for granted what is denied them? And if every one should act thus, as all are prone to do, (every one naturally having a good Opinion of himself, and being therefore desirous to rule and govern) how should we ever unite; and when should there be Peace in the Church? Nothing but an over-powering Force could then keep the differing Parties from assailing each other. 'Tis not the Confidence of those who boldly arrogate the Truth to themselves, would make or keep the Peace, and maintain an Union; but the fear of the strongest Side and mere outward Force; the nature and consequence of which we shall presently observe.

But at present let it be considered, could ever God, who is the God of Peace and Order, have founded Religion

ligion on ſo dangerous and ruinous a Bottom, or given ſuch a confuſed Rule as this: "Let thoſe that ſide "with the Truth have the right to determine and pre- "ſcribe, in ſuch Expreſſions as they judge beſt, all the "Points that muſt or muſt not be received; and let all "the reſt obediently ſubmit thereto, and ſo unite?

Doth this ſound like an Oracle of God? Who ſees not that it could breed nothing but Confuſion and Uncertainty? For as was obſerved, thou believeſt that the Truth is of thy ſide; and another believeth it is of his: If thou then requireſt hereupon others to believe as thou doeſt; will not others, upon the ſame Grounds require the like of thee? And how ſhall we know, which of you muſt be obeyed? Or what ſhall be done, and what will become of Unity, till your Controverſies be decided?

Thoſe that lay ſuch unjuſt Commands, and make their Confeſſions of Faith as binding and deciſive as the very Word of God, and more; require Contradictions and aſſert Things that are inconſiſtent. They acknowledge they are no more infallible than other Men, and yet aſſert that other Men ought to receive their Conceits and Deciſions, as if they were actually infallible.

Again, they enjoyn all Men to believe nothing but what is expreſly contained in the Holy Scripture: And after all, they abſolutely require an entire Subjection to all their Determinations, without leaving any room to judge whether any of their Determinations be not contrary to the Scriptures.

Yet, as we have ſaid, they lay down this as one of their Principles, that Men ought to examine and have the Liberty to judge for themſelves; and they aſſert that that is the beſt Thing we can do: And at the ſame time they evidently oppreſs and cut off this precious Liberty.

Who doth not then perceive that this is to Build with one Hand, and pull down with the other; to cry out in Words against *Misrepresented Popery*, and to put it Daily in practice in very Deeds?

Surely such Dealings ought to be abominated. They that see not the Unjustice and Tyranny thereof, are blinded by Partiality, and by the God of this World. And they that *see* this, and *Countenance it*, are the worst and most mischievous of Hypocrites, and shall be eternally Accursed as such.

CHAP. VI.

The Confutation of the Fourth and last Pretence to Magisterial Authority.

BUT Lastly, doth not the right of interpreting magisterially the Scripture, and fixing what Terms of Unity may be thought best, belong to those who have the Number and Power of their Side?

That might be a *Roman Catholick* Question: (And yet 'twould be of little use, and would render but ill Service, for Instance, in the *Indies*;) But can such an Expedient ever enter into the Brains of a Protestant? No, but it may perhaps into his Heart; for some Men love sometime to practise what their Judgment doth not always absolutely approve of.

But what horrid Tyranny is it to impose on others, because thou hast Power? Is Number or Success the Test by which Controversies are to be judged of? Let every sincere Christian consider; are not many called, and but few hearken to the heavenly Calling? Is it not seen by Experience, that the greatest number incline

to

to Evil, and that but few are Good and actually work their Salvation?

If they that have Force and Power were to determine what is or what is not to be believed; those that are forced, would but be Hypocrites; and the Truth would be in an eminent Danger of being extirpated.

This is the natural Tendency of that Expedient; to force Men to be Hypocrites, and endanger the total ruin of the Truth.

For if this Principle was constantly in Vogue, and generally reduced to Practice; wicked Men, which are always the greateſt Number, ſhould prevail over the Good, and not leave one till they were all Extinct. The World would be filled with Confuſion and Calamity. What were *Truth in one Place, would be Error in another.* In one Place it would be ſet up by Force, and by Force pulled down in another Place. Religion would occaſion continually nothing but Diſorders and Troubles. There would be no Safety nor Tranquillity. And in the midſt of theſe Horrors and univerſal Injuries, Men would forget even Humanity, and quickly become Devils.

What more favourable can be expected, if Force have the direction of Things, in Matters of Religion? It is in it ſelf an abominable Impiety, any ways to *Force* or *Awe* the Conſciences of Men. For if it be Impious in any Man to chuſe or profeſs a Religion which his Mind tells him is falſe and contrary to the Will and Good-liking of God; can it be leſs Impious in others, to conſtrain ſuch a one, by Penalties and Terrors, to affront and diſobey God?

At beſt, this way, Truth would at leaſt be as much endangered as Error. It were a mere Chance if it fell into the Hands of the Multitude. Truth or Error ſhould be ſet up indifferently as it might happen, according to the Humour and Prejudices of thoſe that rule or influence the greater Number.

And

And by the ſame Chance Error or Truth ſhould be oppreſſed.

Is this the Caution our Saviour recommends in the Parable of the Tares, *Mat.* 13. 29. " The Servants " ſaid unto him, wilt thou that we go and gather up " the Tares? But he ſaid, Nay; leſt while ye gather " up the Tares, ye root up alſo the Wheat with them. Which ſhews that this being a Caſe liable to miſtake, Men muſt not be guilty of ſuch a temerity as to uſe Force or Authority here, becauſe that would endanger the doing extreme Wrong and infinite Miſchief. And why *boaſteſt thou then that thou* canſt do this, that is, that *thou canſt do Miſchief*, whereas *the goodneſs of God endureth yet Daily*? God ſhall certainly judge thee, thou whited Wall, and repay thee the Groans of the Oppreſſed.

But thoſe that are hurried by Partiality and Paſſion, in their Heat and Fury cannot hearken to the Inſtructions of Jeſus Chriſt. " They will not enter into the " Kingdom of Heaven themſelves, nor ſuffer thoſe that " would go in." They do not conſider thoroughly Matters of Religion, nor will let others do it; they will decide of Controverſies, tho' they will not half underſtand or examine them. Altho' others are diſintereſſed and diſpoſed to ſearch Things ſincerely, they deſpiſe them as unfit to diſcuſs, or as uncapable to know thoſe Things like them, when themſelves are notoriouſly blinded by Intereſt, and biaſſed by Prejudice and Partiality.

Thoſe are they that eſteeming themſelves the only underſtanding Perſons, take upon them the priviledge of making Gloſſes and Comments which others muſt abſolutely receive; who as Tyrants domineer over the Conſciences of Men, and at the leaſt Anathematize thoſe that differ from them. Like the *Phariſees*, John. 7. 49. that damned them who favour'd our Saviour's Doctrin.

" This

" This People who knoweth *not the Law*, ſaid they, " *are Curſed.*

As they judge no Body is fit to underſtand the Word of God, but themſelves; they therefore magiſterially interpret it as they think beſt, and conclude it to be the Duty of other Men abſolutely to ſubmit to their Determinations: Talk of examining as much as you will, but in fine ſubmit you muſt; for they that receive not their Sentiments or fall not into their Senſe, are by them judged to oppoſe and quarrel with, if not expreſly to reject Scripture it ſelf. So that there is no Liberty left to think otherwiſe than they do. And if this be not to *take away the Key of Knowledge*, What is?

Now what is the occaſion of all this Preſumption, but becauſe they have Force and Number of their Side; they Influence thoſe that Influence others; the Multitude takes their Deciſions as Oracles and as the Standard of Truth, and ſo they eſteem themſelves to have Rights and Priviledges above other Men?

And are none among Proteſtants guilty of that corrupt Leaven of the *Phariſees*? Yes; all thoſe that will not admit of Union, without you receive their Sentiments and ſubmit to their Dictates, not being content with the Latitude of Holy Scripture, but making themſelves the Rule or the Magiſterial Judges and Interpreters, whether they have the greateſt Number and Power or not, tyrannizing in their own Sphere, and as far as their uſurp'd Authority can extend, giving Proof of what they would do if they were the Maſters of the World.

But you'll ſay, hath a Church no Rights, no Authority, no Priviledges? Yes, I anſwer; To explain the Scriptures, not Magiſterially but according to the *Method of Scripture*; To provide the Adminiſtration of the Rites of the New Covenant, as they are found to be inſtituted in God's Word; to regulate Circumſtantials and Accidentals in Religion; * *See* ch. 19.

in

in ſum, To make Regulations concerning Diſcipline, as generally comprehenſive as the Latitude it ſelf of Scripture; that *every Thing may both be done Decently and to Edification*, that all Contention may be ſuperſeded, all Partiality and Tyranny abſolutely being avoided, that thoſe that have Force and Number of their Side, be no more favoured than others. *

* *Debent Chriſtiani ſe intra primorum Chriſtianorum & Apoſtolorum Simplicitatem & generalitatem continere, qui una concione aliquot hominum millia ad Chriſti fidem adduxerunt; aut duodecim illis Catholicæ Fidei Articulis, Symbolo Apoſtolico comprehenſis, hoc eſt, pauci admodum, & pauci Ceremoniis, contenti eſſe, & in aliorum conſcientias dominium non uſurpare, adeo ut omnes abſque animi offenſione publicos cœtus frequentare, & ibi inter ſe Euchariſtiam celebrare poſſint.*

CHAP. VII.

An Inquiry, Whether, and how far the drawing of particular Articles of Faith by particular Churches, is Lawful or Unwarrantable.

BUT then is the drawing of Articles of Faith, particular to particular Churches, unwarrantable and unlawful? That is certainly unwarrantable in one Senſe, and in another not unlawful; 'tis therefore of very great Moment to diſtinguiſh well here betwixt the one and the other.

In ſum, it would be unlawful, if we ſhould take upon us ſuch an Authority, that we have no Right to, and that we would not grant to another Church: Which would be, as appears by what hath been ſaid, if our Articles did not admit of that Latitude which corre-

ſponds

ſponds with that of Holy Scripture, and if they were impoſed, as infallible and as magiſterial Determinations, upon thoſe that were to joyn in communion with us.

Thus, for Inſtance, if the *Remonſtrants* (making up a Church) ſhould, by the magiſterial Impoſition of unſcriptural Articles, to be received as the Oracles of God, reject out of their Communion thoſe that do not take their Determinations of the ſenſe of ſome controverted Places of Scripture to be true; ſuch Articles would be partial, and would make the *Remonſtrants* to be truly Schiſmaticks. The ſame may be applied to the *Contra-remonſtrants*.

But if either of them draw Articles declaratory of their being Scripturaliſts or Proteſtants, and likewiſe more expreſly to notify the Sentiments (in many particulars) of the generality of their ſeveral Societies, preſenting the ſaid Articles to their Members, as Terms of Agreement and Peace, to avoid *Contentions among Teachers in their publick Diſcourſes*; and if they conceive them ſo as that they be not expreſly contradictory to the method and generality of Scripture; but that with a ſafe Conſcience the *Contra-remonſtrants* may in the Senſe aforeſaid ſubſcribe to them in the *Remonſtrants* Communion, and the *Remonſtrants* may do the like in the Communion of the *Contra-remonſtrants*; then there is no hurt nor injuſtice in thoſe Articles.

That is the Medium and the Moderation which the *Church of England* ſeems to have choſen to follow. And that Moderation is abſolutely neceſſary in the drawing up of particular Articles of Faith, that there be no tyranny nor injuſtice in impoſing them on any Men. For if we frame Articles otherwiſe than according to the Reſtrictions aforeſaid, we evidently take upon us ſuch an Authority as we have no Title to, and as we would not be willing that thoſe who differ from us ſhould take upon them if they had Force and Power; and ſo we are inevitably guilty of Partiality and Unjuſtice,

justice, and of spiritual Usurpation and Tyranny. This is the plain result of the 3d, 4th, 5th and 6th foregoing Chapters. For if no Men have any Right to Magisterial Authority, either upon the account of their Learning, or their Offices in the Church, or of their having the Truth, or Number and Power of their Side; then they have no shadow of Title left to that Authority, it being confest that none in these Times are infallible.

Nevertheless some are still apt to think that a Church without Injustice, might frame, establish and impose in a magisterial Sense, any Articles of Communion whatsoever; so if any one did not like them, and would not submit to them, he might have leave to withdraw from her, and retire to some other place out of her Dominions, supposing her to be the national and governing Church; they urge that the *Church of England* dealeth thus particularly with the *Papists*, her Articles not admitting of such a Latitude as to comprehend them in her Communion; and they make use of this Argument, as if it were a good Evasion to elude all that hath been said for the *Method of Scripture*, or against that of *Magisterial Authority*.

But First, There is here suppos'd, but not prov'd that that is not Unjust, which actually is Unjust. Secondly, there is a sophistical way of Reasoning in the Objection, which proveth nothing: And Thirdly, the reason of the *Church of England*'s dealing with the *Papists* is overlook'd and perfectly mistaken.

First, There is here supposed, but not proved, that that is not unjust, which actually is unjust. For it is only suppos'd that the leaving the liberty to retire from a Church, makes it lawful, and is a sufficient Warrant for her to impose what Articles, and appoint what Terms of Communion she pleases, altho' that cause a Schism.

But would, indeed, Proteſtants think it not unjuſt for the Church of *Rome* to enjoyn what ſhe doth for Terms of Communion, (which are not ſo enjoyned in Scripture) if ſhe did but allow that permiſſion to every one to depart, that liked not of her Terms?

That were the ſame Thing as if it was aſſerted that it would not be unjuſt in a Monarch, uſurping abſolute and arbitrary Power, to enact the moſt tyrannical Laws, ſo he did but permit, all that would, either to ſtay or to go their way.

Firſt of all, is not the uſurpation of this arbitrary Power in it ſelf unjuſt? Hath not every one a ſacred Right to that common Liberty which God has founded and laid the Grounds of? And have not all a Right to their Country, to their Goods, and the free enjoyment of all their juſt Poſſeſſions? If it was allowable to one Prince to uſurp abſolute Power, and exerciſe Tyranny upon thoſe that dwell in his Dominions: Why ſhould not the ſame be allowed to another, and likewiſe to all; what would then become of the common Security and Tranquillity?

The Caſe is the ſame, as to ſpiritual Governours. If a Church taketh upon her to impoſe unſcriptural Articles; why ſhall not another do the like? Shall not then the little number of good Chriſtians be in perpetual Danger? They ſhall be toſſed upon the Waves of the World, from one place to another, and never find reſt nor Ground to ſet their Foot upon. They ſhall be tyrannized every where, and ſhall find none with whom to unite. And doth really the Goſpel neceſſarily give occaſion to all this Confuſion and Unjuſtice? God forbid!

Where doth the Scripture warrant any Churches to impoſe Terms of Communion as they pleaſe? If there is no grounds for this Priviledge neither in Reaſon nor in the Word of God, as certainly there is not; and if it has been ſolidly proved, in the 3d, 4th, 5th and 6th fore-

foregoing Chapters, that it can be pretended to on no account whatsoever; those that take it upon them, are they not then, as we have said, guilty of Spiritual Usurpation, and of most intolerable Unjustice and Tyranny?

They take a Magisterial Authority upon them, they know not why, or upon what Grounds; and they palpably deal with other Men, as they would not that others should deal with them; howsoever they are pleased to suppose, that as long as they violently force not People to be of their Persuasion and Communion, all the rest they do, in Determining, Ordaining, Imposing, &c. cannot be unjust.

They would think it highly unjust in others, if other Men, differing from them, took upon 'em (I do not say to constrain them to comply to their Terms, and compel them to be of their Profession, but even) to determine after their way what is not determined in Scripture, to fix controverted Matters to their own particular Sense, and then magisterially impose that Sense, and those Determinations and Comments of theirs upon them that would be of their Communion.

They would surely esteem such Proceedings an infringing of their Christian Liberty, and all natural Priviledges; altho' it were left to their Choice whether they would submit to such Terms, and joyn with the Church that imposed them, or no.

Notwithstanding that seeming Moderation of such Spiritual Tyrants, they would think it very hard thus to be forced to a Separation, and be deprived of the advantages of the Dominant Church, to which all naturally have an equal Right. They would with much reason complain of extreme injury done 'em, and would justly charge those Magisterial Judges with the cause of the Separation. For in determining and ordaining Things for Terms of Cummunion, which are not ordained nor determined in Scripture, (and so driving away

away from their Communion those whose Consciences do not allow of such Terms) they were undoubtedly the Authors of the Schism, if a Schism ensued thereupon; as with reason we urge to the Church of *Rome* that they are not always Schismaticks that separate, but those that give occasion to the Schism; as they undeniably do, which keep not to that Latitude that is mutually due from one to another, but take upon them to appoint what Terms of Communion they please, tho' no where expressed as Terms of Communion in God's Word.

Now if any would think this unjust in others, how can they judge the same measures excusable and just in themselves? If they say it is because they esteem they have the Truth of their side; for this I may refer them to our fifth Chapter. For in short, others esteem they have the Truth of their side, as well as they: And God can never have allowed that Priviledge of Magisterial Authority to those that actually have the Truth, more than to others, because that would have been of no use, and would have given occasion to universal Confusion and to all the Tyranny that could be exercised from different Parties upon one another, every one, as has been said, esteeming that it is he that holds the Truth.

And if they say that those who have worldly Power or ecclesiastical Authority, ought to have the priviledge to determine Controversies, so as to appoint what unscriptural Terms of Communion they judge best, leaving but the forementioned liberty to every one to joyn and comply with, or separate from them: To what has been said in the Fourth and sixth Chapters, that this Principle would endanger the oppression of the Truth, and would cause the greatest Disorder; I add also that it would authorise Partiality and Unjustice. For those that should have Power, and should act according to this Principle; would yet, themselves (as we

have ſhewn) be ſenſible, that if others had Power, and dealt thus with them, they would think it infinitely hard and unjuſt. It appears therefore that in the aforeſaid Evaſion it is ſuppoſed that that is not unjuſt which actually is extremely unjuſt; according to thoſe Axioms of natural Right. *Alteri ne feceris quod tibi fieri non vis: Quod quiſque juris in alterum ſtatuerit, ipſe eodem jure utatur*, &c.

Secondly, In the Objection there is a ſophiſtical way of Reaſoning which proves nothing. It is concerning the Church of *England*'s dealing with the Papiſts. And the Objection imports thus much; *The Church of* England, ſay they, *only doth not force Papiſts to comply with her, but giveth them liberty if they will not do ſo, to retire; but her Articles by no means admit of ſuch a Latitude as to comprehend them in her Communion.* Now what Argument is this; and what doth it prove? Did we ever aſſert that the Church of *England* is infallible? If not, there is then in this Argument nothing deciſive. But yet it is certain that there is nothing, in this proceeding of the Church of *England*, contrary to the *Method of Scripture*: As we ſhall find, if we obſerve,

Thirdly, That the reaſon of the Church of *England*'s dealing with the Papiſts is here overlooked and perfectly miſtaken. For they greatly err, if they imagine that the Church of *England* particularly excludes the Papiſts out of her Society, out of any Principles of Tyranny which we juſtly charge upon the Church of *Rome*. And they never conſidered that according to the *Method of Scripture*, Papiſts exclude themſelves, and not we them, out of the Society of Chriſtians that hold to the *Terms of Scripture*. They are *Anti-ſcripturaliſts*, expreſly rejecting the *Method of Scripture*. Popery is a politick Faction, whereof the Members, whereſoever they are, own the Pope for their Superior: And their Principle of Perſecuting and Deſtroying (where and when they

they can) those that submit not to his Decisions; renders 'em the declared Enemies of all Mankind, besides those of their own Communion.

CHAP. VIII.

The second Argument for the Method of Scripture.

THE second Argument for the *Method of Scripture*, is, That it is agreeable to the Principles of Protestants, and is necessarily therein implied. This Argument is pertinent and weighty, being *Argumentum ad hominem*, seeing it is to Protestants that I write.

Now that the Method of Scripture is agreeable to the Protestant Principles, is very evident. For Protestants unanimously hold the Scripture to be the Rule of their Faith and Practice. And can that import that the Opinion or Conceptions of any Man or Company of Men shall be preferred before the *Text* of Scripture, or that any Men shall have the Authority to make *Glosses* that shall be as decisive and binding as the *Word of God*; and, so, that private Persons must captivate their Judgment to the Judgment of their Leaders? No; for it is, expressly, one of the Protestant Principles, that *the Judgment of Discretion is to be allowed to every particular Man*: So that the Protestant Principles evidently imply, that Ministers have only the Commission of Discoursing upon the Scripture, and impartially representing its probable Senses to the People, without requiring a blind or absolute Submission, or rejecting any one that makes the Word of God his supream Rule, and understands Scripture in that Sense which appears to him to be the most probable. " For allowing to

" every one the liberty to judge for himſelf, thereby " no more is made abſolutely neceſſary, but in general " to receive the Scripture for our Guide and Rule; and " therefore we are under Obligation to hold Fellow- " ſhip with them that do ſo. " But if we content not our ſelves with the generality of Scripture, but impoſe our Interpretations upon others, as neceſſary to be received by them, that they may be admitted into the ſame Communion with us; then we do not eſteem the Holy Scripture to be a compleat and perfect Rule, but make, in good Deed, our Comments and Deciſions, and our ſelves the Rule, and we *expreſly contradict our own Principle* of allowing the judgment of Diſcretion inviolably to all Men.

If any of us pretend that their Aſſertions are an explanation of Scripture, and the *true Senſe* of it, and that, upon that account, all muſt be exactly of their Sentiments, who will be owned for true Chriſtians; that is to aſſume the priviledge of *Magiſterial Authority* on that Pretence, which in the 5th Chapter hath been proved to be vain and groundleſs, and which manifeſtly is oppoſite to all the fundamental Principles of Proteſtants.

It may be thou verily believeſt that thy Conceits and Opinions are the genuine Senſe of Scripture; but why ſhall not another pretend the ſame of his Interpretations? Upon what Pretence ſhall any of us ſet up for Magiſterial Judges; or with what Face ſhall any dare to aſcribe that Right to himſelf, who owns this to be his Principle, That all Men ought to have the liberty to judge for themſelves?

How can then any *Proteſtants* any manner of ways oppoſe our Method of Union, the *Method of Scripture*, or not content themſelves with the Terms and generality of *Scripture*, in order to Agreement and Union?

Are not the Scriptures clear to every one's Conſcience, as to all things abſolutely neceſſary?

Is

Is there any other Judge appointed, magiſterially to judge of Controverſies?

Who do *Proteſtants* ſay muſt be that Judge; and what is it that he muſt do?

If no Man is to be the abſolute and magiſterial Judge of Controverſies, and none have right magiſterially to interpret Scripture; then neceſſarily it muſt be left in the Latitude that the Words are capable of: "For if "any deſtroyed that Latitude, they would abſolutely "overthrow the Proteſtant Principles, and ſet up again, "actually, thoſe of the Church of *Rome*." This is a weighty Argument to convince Proteſtants of the neceſſity of ſticking expreſly to *Scripturaliſm*, if it appear, as it ſo evidently doth, that a contrary Method is abſolutely inconſiſtent with their Principles; for then they muſt either hold to this Method, or renounce their own Principles, and ceaſe to be Proteſtants. There is no *Medium*, if they will act conſiſtently to themſelves. And ſurely it is a ſhameful piece of Raſhneſs and Inconſideration, to admit of Principles in *the Theory*, and condemn them in *the Practice*.

I would therefore particularly intreat our diſſenting Brethren, and them any where in the World who act by the ſame Meaſures, who ſeem to take the leaſt notice of theſe Things, aſſuming the Right, directly contrary to the *Method of Scripture*, of Framing, not *Articles of Peace*, but large Profeſſions, which are ſo many *Magiſterial Interpretations* and *Determinations*, which they make as binding as the Divine Oracles; to conſider ſincerely and attentively what Grounds they go upon.

My earneſt deſire would be to reunite all ſorts of Diſſenters, in as much as they receive the Word of God for their Rule; and I ſhew them, and all Proteſtants, the way to a happy Union: But it is upon ſuppoſition that they will conſtantly be guided by the Proteſtant Principles, that they will follow them exactly, and that

they will weigh them more carefully than it appears is ordinarily done.

I plead for the *Method of Scripture*, from those Assertions, which are the first Principles of the Reformation: *That* no Man is to judge of Controversies for other Men; *That* all Persons have the priviledge of judging for themselves; *That* the Scriptures are sufficiently clear, for every Man, as to all Things necessary; *That* they are a compleat and perfect Rule, *&c.* It would be absolutely needless and superfluous purposedly to bring any Proofs, to shew that these are Protestant Tenets, that being so *notorious to all Men*, and the very Reformation and our Separation from the Church of *Rome being founded thereupon*: Yet it might prove useful and satisfactory, if in examing the method of Union which I propose, our Brethren who differ from us, but profess a deep veneration for the first Reformers, weighed at the same time and compared what those Doctors (whom some of them are inclined almost blindly to follow) together with their Disciples universally say of the Principles of Protestants; for if their Expressions be duly considered, it will thereby appear that they actually imply our Method, the *Method of Scripture*.

Peter Martyr, for Instance, in several Places speaks to this purpose: " In all things necessary to Salvation, " the Scriptures are not intricate nor dark; and who- " soever shall read them attentively and diligently, will " easily find that what is sometime obscurely expressed, " is taught clearly in other Places. (*Loci Communes D. Petri Martyris. Tigur.* 1587. P. 1060.)

" There is then no reason that our Adversaries " should oblige us to acquiesce to their Determinations, " without examining. St. *Austin* hath written some " Books of *Christian Doctrin*, where he lays down ma- " ny Rules to interpret the Scripture. But in none of " them he directs us to the Authority of the Church. " He bids us in order to discover the sense of obscure

" Places,

" Places, to conſult the meaning of the Words, to take " heed to what goes before, and what follows, to ex- " plain an intricate Place by another more clear and " eaſy, and, in ſum, to make uſe of ſuch like means. *(P. 749.)*

" The Word of God is moſt certain in it ſelf, and " needs not to be propped, or the ſenſe thereof to be " confirmed and eſtabliſhed, by Men's Authority. The " Church indeed is the Pillar and Ground of Truth, " in as much as ſhe is the Depoſitary of Holy Writ, " and the Text of Scripture is both preſerved and " kept, and read and preached in the midſt of her; " for out of the Chriſtian Church the revealed Word " of God is not to be heard of: But the Church is not " ſaid to be the Ground and Pillar of Truth, as if the " Word of God was uncertain and ſtaggering without " her Determination of its Senſe, or as if it was of no " Authority without ſuch a Determination. As long " indeed as the Church ſpeaks agreeably to Scripture, " ſhe neither erreth, nor can err; but when ſhe ſpeaks " or acts beſides it, ſhe not only may err, but actually " errs. *(ibid.)*

" Faith is not ſubjected to the Authority or Deter- " mination of the Church. The Office of Eccleſiaſticks " is to preach, exhort, reprove, warn, and conſtantly " repreſent what God ſaith in the Scriptures; but the " true Church doth not deſire to be believed, further " than ſhe uttereth the *very Words* of God. *(P. 490.)*

" Fathers differ in many Things from other Fathers; " Councils contradict one another: There are very " few Fathers, and ſcarce any, that do not ſometime " err in moſt weighty Points; and there hath often " been occaſion to amend and rectify the Determina- " tions of Councils. Doth not the Scripture *expreſly teſtify that all Men are Liars?* (P. 60.) So far *Peter Martyr.*

Zuinglius ſpeaks thus to the ſame purpoſe: " Chriſt " ſaith, ſearch the Scriptures. He bids us ſearch the " Scriptures our ſelves, and doth not ſend us to Men, " to determine the Senſe of Scripture for us. *(Operum D. Huldr. Zuinglii; Tiguri,* 1581. *Tom. prim. fol.* 3.)

" We need no other Councils than the pure, the true " and uncorrupt Doctrin of Chriſt. But they *(the Pa-* " *piſts)* will ſay, who ſhall end the Controverſies that " are now a-days in the Church, who ſhall *magiſte-* " *rially* judge of them; who ſhall pronounce the de- " ciſive Sentence? I anſwer, the Word of God; nei- " ther will we bear any other Judge. *(ibid. fol.* 107.)

Whitaker likewiſe thus expreſſeth himſelf: " The " Word of God is it ſelf both the Sentence and the " Judge, the Interpreter and the Rule. *(Guilielm. Whitakeri Oper. Theologic. Aureliæ Allobrogum,* 1610. *Tom. Prim.* P. 356.) " Theſe three Things are requi- " ſite in the ſupream Judge of Controverſies. Firſt, " That we may be certain that his Judgment is true, " and that we may rely upon it. Secondly, That it " be not lawful to appeal from his Deciſions. Third- " ly, That he be not biaſſed by any Partiality. But " none of theſe *Properties and Advantages* can be aſ- " cribed to the Church: But they are all to be found " in Scripture, and the *Holy Spirit that ſpeaketh in* " *Scripture.* The ſupream Judgment therefore is to " be attributed to theſe, and not to the Church. *(ibid.* " P. 357.) That we may not let our ſelves be deceived, " we are commanded to ſearch the Scripture, and try the " Spirits. But what room could there be for this caution " of ſearching the Scriptures, and this care of examining, " or to what purpoſe could they be laid upon us, if we " were obliged merely to hearken, and abſolutely to ſub- " mit to what were taught by thoſe that might call them- " ſelves the Church? *(Tom. Secund.* P. 77.)

" The Aſſertions of the Teachers and Paſtors of the " Church are to be carefully examined and tried by the

" Word

" Word of God, that they may be aſſented unto if they a-
gree therewith, but otherwiſe be rejected. Saith *Piſcator.*
(*Commentar. in Libros Nov. Teſt. Herbornæ Naſſoviorum.*
1638. *P.* 632.)

Beza in ſome Places thus expreſſeth himſelf: " We
" know that the Truth of God is grounded on a much
" firmer bottom than Men's Opinion, whether few or
" many; and we except out of the common Condition
" of Mankind (which is of being ſubject to Ignorance
" and Error) none but thoſe who have ſpoken by the
" inſpiration of God, the Prophets (that is) and the
" Apoſtles, by the Miniſtry of whom God hath been
" pleaſed that his Will ſhould be fully recorded in the
" Canonical Books of the Old and New Teſtament.
" And Experience it ſelf confirmeth, not only that Hy-
" pocrites, ignorant and malicions Perſons, and falſe
" Prophets often bear Office in the Church; but alſo
" that the beſt Men *do not always know all Things.* (The-
od. Bezæ Tractat. Theolog. Vol. Prim. *P.* 38.)

" The interpretation of Scripture is not to be ſought
" for any where elſe but in the Scripture it ſelf. Chriſt
" would not have warned Men to beware of the
" Leaven of the Phariſees, if they that ſat in *Moſes's*
" Chair had been abſolutely to be ſubmitted unto:
" And *Caiaphas* and the whole Council of the Jewiſh
" Prieſts had not condemned our Saviour, if the Holy
" Spirit had been always inſeparable from them that
" ſat in *Aaron's* Seat. (*Ibid. Vol. Tert. P.* 138.)

Calvin likewiſe ſaith: " Faith is founded, not in
" Ignorance, but in Knowledge; and not in the Know-
" ledge of God only, but alſo in that of his *Will.*
(*Calv. Inſtit. Lib.* 3. *Cap.* 2. *Sect* 2.)

" *Paul* bids the Theſſalonians *try all Things:* Signi-
" fying that tho' all Men do not ſpeak exactly accord-
" ing to Scripture, however before we reject or con-
" demn any Doctrin, we are to examine it. Men
" uſually fail as to this Point, two ſeveral ways. For
" ſome reject indifferently any Doctrin, becauſe they

" have

" have been deceived or know that frequently ſome are
" deceiv'd by ſuch as pretend to declare the Truth
" in the Name of God: Others with a fooliſh credulity receive without examining any Thing that is propoſed to them as coming from God. Either of which
" is Evil. For the firſt being full of their Prejudice,
" make it impoſſible for them ever to be better informed: And the others raſhly expoſe themſelves to any
" Error that comes in their way. The Apoſtle is willing to draw back the Theſſalonians from either of
" theſe Extreams, and bring them into the right Path,
" when he both forbids them to condemn any Thing
" before they have firſt duly examined it, and commands them to judge carefully, themſelves, before
" they receive for certain that which is propoſed to
" them. And certainly that Reverence at leaſt is due
" to the Divine Oracles, that we deſpiſe not what is
" ſaid to come from God. We are not to be ſo negligent or indifferent in a Matter of this Moment,
" but are diligently to judge and examine, before we
" reject it as falſe, or receive it as certainly true.
" Whence we conclude, that God gives Chriſtians the
" Power to diſcern, that they may be able to keep
" themſelves from being deceived by the Deluſions of
" Men: For if they had not the power of Diſcerning,
" the Apoſtle would in vain have bidden them to try
" all Things, and hold that which is good. But
" if we have not ſufficiently of our ſelves the ability
" of examining what is incumbent upon us, we muſt
" beg it of the Holy Spirit of God, which ſpake by
" his Prophets. (*Calv. Commentar. in Epiſtolas. P.* 553.)

" Thus he that rightly knoweth what uſe he is to
" make of the Holy Scripture, wants nothing that is
" neceſſary to Salvation, or to Holy Living.

" *Paul* aſſerts that abſolutely the Scripture is ſufficient to make Men perfect. Wherefore whoſoever

is

' is not content with the Scripture, desires to be wiser ' than needs, *or is expedient.* (*Ibid. P.* 641.) So far *Calvin.*

Now, certainly, the *Method of Scripture* appears to be necessarily implied in these, and the like Passages of those eminent Doctors of the Reformation; in which these three Things are unanimously held: First, That no Party has Authority magisterially to interpret Scripture; but, Secondly, That every Christian has right to examine, to interpret and judge for himself; and Thirdly, That all Things necessary are so clear in Scripture that whosoever reads it with Application and Sincerity, may easily find them there.

The famous *Le Blanc* (one of the most esteemed of modern Writers, among Protestants,) is also express and full to that purpose; and what he say'th, is the general sense of all Protestants without exception.

Protestants, saith he, " hold that all Things necessa- ' ry to Salvation are clear in Scripture. But at the ' same time they acknowledg that often the Scripture ' is obscure and very difficult, as to those Things that ' are not of the like necessity. " (*Ludov. Le Blanc. Theses Theolog. Londin.* 1675. *P.* 129. *Theses de Script. Sacr. Perspicuit. Thes.* 2.)

" By the difficult places that sometimes occur in ' Scripture, God has been willing to exercise our ' Industry, and excite us to a careful reading of his ' Word. He has ordered Things as they are there, ' lest on the one hand a perpetual Clearness and Evi- ' dence should render Men lazy and careless in read- ' ing the Scripture; or on the other left a too great ' difficulty should discourage us from reading it at all. (*Ibid. Thes.* 11.)

" Protestants do not assert that the Scripture is so ' clear and evident in all Things any ways necessary ' to Faith and to Salvation, that in order to understand ' it there need no study, no care and diligence, as if

" any

" any Christian could, presently, be sufficiently assured " of its Sense, without any manner of *help*. (*Ibid. Thes.* 12.)

" *To that intent* that all might discern the sense of " Scripture, *among other* helps, God has given Teach- " ers to his Church, that might explain the Word of " God, display the sense of Scripture, and as it were " guide with the Hand the Congregation of the Faith- " ful to a right understanding thereof. (*Ibid. Thes.* 13.)

" Which sense of Scripture nevertheless, as it is shewn " and displayed by their Teachers, Christian People " are not blindly to receive without examining, whe- " ther it be indeed the true sense of Scripture. (*Ibid. Thes.* 14.)

" It is harder to find out and discuss the sense of a " Passage one self, than to discern and judge of it, by " the very evidence of the Truth, when it is discussed " and demonstrated by another Person. To help his " People, to make these Discussions, God has given " Ministers to his Church. And then, to judge aright, " in Matters of Moment, *when they are represented and* " *considered*, there seems no more to be requisite, but " the assistance of the Holy Spirit, which no good " Christian can be without. (*Ibid. Thes.* 15.)

" Undeniably, when God caused the Doctrin of " Holy Scripture to be recorded in Writing, his De- " sign was that by that means it might be more easily " preserved and propagated in the World, and kept " from the alteration that otherwise it might have been " liable to thro' Man's Fraud, or Mistake and For- " getfulness. Now God could not have intended that " end by this means, if the Scripture were so obscure, " that without the help of Tradition Christians could " not be certain of its *sense*. (*Ibid. Thes.* 27.)

" God has given the Scripture to Men, that in read- " ing the same, all might learn his Will. The Apostle " solemnly chargeth that his Epistles be read to all

" Chri-

" Christians; and he declares that he writeth (not only " to the Governours of the Church, but) to all the " Faithful. Now if God has caused His Word to be " written to the end that all Christians indifferently, in " reading it, might thereby be instructed in the Do- " ctrine of Salvation; without doubt He has provided it " to be written so clearly, that all, accordingly, in read- " ing or hearing of it, may by that means learn and " understand those things that are necessary to be un- " derstood or to be learned in order to obtain Salvation, " and to have a right Faith. But they could never do " so by the reading of Scripture, if it was so obscure " and ambiguous that they that read and hear it were " not absolutely able to distinguish the true sense there- " of, and if it was so uncertain that it could be turned " and drawn of any side, like a nose of Wax. *Ibid. Thes.* " 28.)

" If the sense of Scripture, in Scripture it self, is ob- " scure and uncertain, and if the Authority and Deter- " mination of the Church is necessary to be certain of " it; then truly the Scripture in no wise deserves the " name of a Rule, seeing a Rule ought to be a thing " in it self certain and determined, and by it self easily " knowable in its kind. Nay, the Determination of " the Church shall be even the Rule of Scripture, if " the words of Scripture do not determine its sense, but " that must be defined and determined by the mouth " and testimony of the Church. (*Ibid. Thes.* 29.)

" Certainly those Divines manifestly contradict them- " selves, who on the one side allow the Scripture to be " the Rule of Faith, or part of the Rule; and yet on " the other, cry that it is no more certain than a Nose " of Wax or a Leaden Rule. A Leaden Rule that turns " and bends at the pleasure of him that useth it, is no " Rule at all, neither deserves in any wise that name. " Whoever then calleth a thing a Leaden Rule, there- " by actually denies that to be a Rule. (*Ibid. Thes.* 30.

Thus

Thus *Le Blanc*. And is not this expreſly to eſtabliſh the *Method of Scripture*? In the name of God do not all theſe Paſſages import that the Scriptures muſt be left in all their Latitude to every one's judgment, and muſt by no means, and for no pretended reaſons, be more determined by any Authority than they are expreſly in themſelves; but that in themſelves they abundantly ſet forth all neceſſary matter of Edification, and that conſequently, they are ſufficient Terms of Union? Otherwiſe, could any one ſeriouſly ſay theſe Principles imply that the Scripture is an *uncertain* Rule without the Determination of the Church, ſo that *Proteſtants* according to their *Principles* can admit of no *Terms of Union*, without each Party propoſe *Un-ſcriptural* Articles, and Determinations of their own, and aſſume the Authority *Magiſterially* to *impoſe* them upon one another, pretending that except matters be thus determined by them, and thoſe Definitions and Deciſions of theirs be ſubmitted unto, the *Scriptures*, which are owned to be *Sufficient* and *Perfect*, will in themſelves be dangerous, and being left in their Latitude, will be a *Leaden-Rule*? Monſtrous and Contradicting!

" Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam, *&c.*

Nothing can be thought of, ſo prodigiouſly inconſiſtent, as holding the *Proteſtant Principles*, (which we have viewed) to oppoſe the *Method of Scripture*. If then we are and will be *Proteſtants*, we muſt neceſſarily conclude with our *Method*, and own that " the Bible only is the Religion of *Proteſtants*,

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

The third Argument for the Method *of* Scripture.

WE have ſhewn firſt, that a Method contrary to *Scripturaliſm*, is not fit nor juſt, and ſecondly, that the *Method of Scripture* is agreeable to, and implied in the Principles of the Reformation. To come to more expreſs Proofs of its fitneſs and of its reaſonableneſs, we muſt now conſider, thirdly, That in its own nature our *Method* will effect that good end, which all Chriſtians ſome way or other aim at, or ought to aim at, namely, The Reſtoring Peace to Chriſtendom, and Uniting all *thoſe that hold the Scripture for the Rule of their Faith.*

That it is earneſtly to be wiſht that all who admit of the Authority of Holy Scripture, ſhould live in Unity and godly Love, is manifeſt; ſeeing *that is aſſuredly their Duty*, and Animoſities and *Diviſions are unſpeakably miſchievous to Chriſtianity*, hinder *Infidels* from being converted, and make Chriſtians generally to buſy themſelves after the ſhadow, whilſt they neglect and let go the Subſtance of Religion, taking for the moſt part ſuch meaſures as are actually ſinful, and forgetting the moſt ſacred Duties of Charity, and often of Humanity it ſelf.

Now *Scripturaliſm* lays down the *Rule*, generally approved by all Chriſtians, and eſtabliſheth this (from thence following) Principle, that all Parties muſt conform themſelves, at leaſt externally, and ſincerely, to the ſaid *Rule*. An *external Conformity to all things expreſſed in the Rule belonging to a Community, is that which makes the Union of it.* Several Parties, without any

any consequence to the Union of the Society, may have different thoughts of their own concerning the exact import and meaning of some outward Acts and Terms in which they agree; and so they do not disturb the Peace of the Community by their different sentiments, but peacebly agree in the generality or latitude, of the said Terms, those differences are not at all mischievous or hurtful to the whole Body: The Union, notwithstanding such differing conceptions, is inviolated and entire. The case is the same as to the Union of the Church. If the Members thereof agree in the outward Terms and Acts, as they are expressed in their Rule, that suffices for Union. Even several Assemblies may hold Union and a good understanding one with another, notwithstanding some outward Differences, if they unanimously keep to the same Rule, and mutually allow to each other a free judgment in understanding the said Rule: Whatever be their Differences, they cannot but thus generally agree (at least *Protestants*) * if they Religiously stick to the Latitude of the Terms of Scripture. That is then the certain way to restore *Peace* to Christians; so that if they follow it, they will infallibly *Unite*, notwithstanding their different Sentiments in many particulars.

* *See Chap.* 19.

CHAP. X.

The fourth Argument for the Method *of* Scripture.

THE fourth Argument is, That our Method of Union is the best security for the Truth at all times. God is too good, and the Terms of the Gospel are too merciful and Gracious, to make the way of Salvation inex-

inextricable, or next to impoſſible to be found out with Evidence and Certainty. Nevertheleſs, how eaſy ſoever it may be in it ſelf to know God and his Will, under the Goſpel, if we do what is incumbent upon us; yet we muſt not imagine to attain thereto, if we do quite contrary to what we ſhould; if we hearken to nothing but our Prejudices, and proceed careleſly and imprudently in our ſeach of Truth. Which thoſe do, that do not give themſelves leave clearly and freely to conſider the Reaſons of others, but raſhly and partially condemn them, (how weighty ſoever they be in themſelves,) and inconſiderately prefer, before them, their own Opinions, what ever they are, when they might diſcern their weakneſs if they carefully conſidered them, ſo as to compare them impartially with the Grounds and Reaſons of other Men.

There is no miſtake but there is ſome ſeemingly probable Grounds for it, which occaſion it: God will have us therefore act like Men, and conſider freely and attentively of things, as reaſonable Creatures ought to do.

Indeed having entred into a Party, or an Opinion with all the ſincerity of our Soul, and being perſuaded of the goodneſs of it, we ſhould not do well, lightly to forſake it. But yet the Love of our Opinions ſhould never put it out of our power to weigh an Argument, nor incline us to prefer a Sophiſtical reaſoning before Solid Proof and Subſtantial Reaſon, when it may be diſcerned.

An honeſt Man's conſtant deſign, ought to be the ſincere diſcovery and acknowledgment of Truth. That ought to be dearer to him, than the deareſt things whatever beſides. This none will diſpute. Nevertheleſs it is certain when Men have not an abſolute freedom to chuſe their Opinions, there are very few that will examine and judge impartially, or at leaſt that will profeſs any other Belief, than that which is Eſta-

blished in the places where they live; except they be in some measure countenanced by a competent number of others dissenting like themselves, or be indeed extraordinarily moved and assisted from above. Wherefore according to the ordinary Course of things, the Truth must be very ill secured, when a free consideration of it is not allowed. That is to trust it on the Multitude, and to venture right or wrong to be of the strongest Side. It follows therefore that *Scripturalism* is the only *Method* of Union advantageous to the Truth, and that is capable to secure it equally at all times; seeing that no other *Method* but this alone so favours Truth as to *encourage an industrious Search, and sincere Profession of it.*

CHAP. XI.

The Fifth Argument.

THE next Argument for the *Method of Scripture* is, That it is Just, Pious and Rational. It appears by what has been said, that properly there are but Two Methods for Union: That *of Scripture*, and that *of Authority*; for as for Disputation, it is impossible, as was observed, to Dispute all Men into the same Belief in all things; therefore it never was, nor ever will be a Means of Union; and tho' it sometimes serves for a pretence, as if the Unscriptural and disputable Terms proposed as Terms of Union, were only founded upon, and ushered in with Reason; yet certainly those that make use of this way to Establish any other Terms besides *Scripturalism*, never rest meerly upon that Method, nor rely altogether upon the goodness of the Cause managed in their Disputes, as if they would

would content themſelves with the effect that their Reaſons and Arguments may have; but to this pretended Method they joyn that of *Authority*; that is at the long run the way by which themſelves end the Controverſie; they'l Diſpute, but ſtill all things are Decreed; and after all, if you'll Unite with them, you muſt, ſay what you pleaſe, ſubmit to their own Terms; ſo that Violence and Oppreſſion are annexed to, and are inſeparable from this Method, which may properly be called the Method, not meerly of Authority, but of Unjuſtice and Tyranny. For if in any manner we make uſe of the way of Authority to unite different Parties, by forcing all the reſt to comply to the Terms and Sentiments of the one of them; they that make uſe of this Method, beſide that they run the hazard of being found (as we have ſeen) even to fight againſt God, and to exterminate the Truth, ſeeing Men may Err; they deal with others, as they would not be dealt with themſelves; they oppreſs the Conſciences of other Men, and they Rob them of their Liberty, and deprive them of the Right (which is common to all Men) every one to judge for himſelf.

But the *Method of Scripture* is Pious, Rational, and Juſt; becauſe therein nothing is offered to others, that we would eſteem unjuſt or unreaſonable if it was offered us. And it is the only Juſt and Reaſonable *Method*, becauſe in the uſe of that Method alone, as we have obſerved, Men deal with others as they would be willing that others ſhould deal with them.

CHAP. XII.

The Sixth Argument for the Method of Scripture.

THE Laſt Argument is, That our Method of Union is agreeable to the expreſs Injunctions and Oracles of the Word of God. The *Method* which the Goſpel lays down and Teaches, Imports not that Chriſtians ſhould be enſlaved to the Judgment of any Men. *Stand faſt*, ſaith St. *Paul*, *in the Liberty wherewith* "Chriſt has made us free, and be not entangled again "with the Yoke of *Bondage*; as it is *Galat.* 5. 1. Which words may certainly be accommodated to this Subject; *for the Liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free*, is not to be reſtrained to the being freed from *Circumciſion* only, but it is truly extended to the being delivered from all real *Spiritual Bondage*, and the being reſtored to all true *ſpiritual Freedom* and Liberty.

The Goſpel cannot then require that we ſhould ſubmit to Humane Authority, in Matters of Religion; but it recommends to us a free and impartial Search of the Scriptures, and conſequently allows us to judge for our ſelves. John 5. 39. *Search the Scriptures.* Acts 17. 11. *Theſe* (the Bereans) *were more noble in that* —— *they ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo.* 1 Cor. 10. 15. *Judge ye what I ſay* 1 Theſſ. 5. 21. *Prove all things.* 1 John 4. 1. *Believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits, whether they are of God.* Acts 4. 19. *Whether it be right in the ſight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.* Acts 5. 29. *We ought to Obey God rather than Men.* 2 Cor. 1. 24. *We have not Dominion over your Faith* 1 Peter 5. 3. *Neither as being Lords over Gods heritage.*

And

And if, after a ſincere Search and careful conſideration, we Err in our Judgment; it doth not authorize any Church or Society of Men to condemn us for our Errours, but chargeth them to bear with us.

Rom. 14. 4. *Who art thou that Judgeſt another Man's Servant? To his own Maſter he ſtandeth or falleth.* And at the 13th Verſe of the ſame Chapter, "Let us "not therefore Judge one another any more; but judge "this rather, that no Man put a ſtumbling-block, or "an occaſion to fall in his Brother's way.

Indeed as for things which manifeſtly are not hurtful nor dangerous, and which muſt be determined one way or other, the Apoſtle intimates that the Church muſt decide in ſuch Caſes, and that all ought freely to comply to ſuch things for Order and Peace-ſake, when they are Eſtabliſhed by Cuſtom, and cannot be altered nor a compliance to them refuſed without Diſorder and Confuſion. He inſtanceth, 1 *Cor.* 11. 4, 5. in praying with ones *Head Covered*, or *Uncovered*. Now that muſt neceſſarily be done either this way or the other; and therefore that there may be Order in the Church, it is neceſſary that it be determined. And for things of this Nature, which are of ſo little Conſequence, and which yet muſt be regulated; there can be no better way than, for Union-ſake, to leave ſuch to Cuſtom, or to the Governours of the Church, and the majority of Votes. That's the leaſt that can be done, for ſo good a thing as Unity. Therefore tho' the Apoſtle offers ſome other Reaſons for what was practiſed in this matter, he concludes with this, at the 16th. Verſe, That that was the general *Cuſtom* of the Church of God, and that here to oppoſe it would be the higheſt piece of *Contention*.

But as for other things that to ſome might not ſeem to be ſo indifferent, and that it was not abſolutely neceſſary to determine, (having no relation to the publick Order of the Aſſemblies, and it being poſſible to

live in Peace and Unity, notwithstanding different Sentiments about them, none but the particular Persons that held them being in any measure concerned therein;) St. *Paul* willeth that they be left in the highest Latitude imaginable, and that every one may decide them for himself as he thinketh best, the Judgment of the Eminentest Persons (concerning such things) notwithstanding. For tho' himself declares what was his Opinion in some such particulars, yet he leaves it still to every ones Liberty to Judge and act herein, as they see good themselves: as about the Question, Whether it was Lawful for Christians to Eat all manner of Meats, or to Eat Herbs only; (*Rom.* 14.) and when he Treats of Marriage, and declares for what respects it is best to Marry, or to abstain from Marrying, 1 *Cor.* 7.

He will have Men in such Cases quietly to enjoy by themselves their own particular Opinions, and to make no bustle about them, nor disturb their Neighbours, nor the Church with them. In short his Will is that Men should keep to the simplicity of the Gospel, and should Unite herein, howsoever they may otherwise differ in Sentiments: that is to say, nothing should be made necessary as Terms of Union, but the *express Word of God*, and *an acknowledgment of it for the sole Rule*. " Follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, " Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure " Heart; but Questions avoid, which gender Strifes. 2 *Tim.* 2. 22, 23. St. *Paul* willeth that to entertain a Christian Communion with one another, we stick to, and content our selves with that which is most indispurable and generally received by those who sincerely embrace Christianity. As he saith to the *Philippians*, 3, 16. *whereto we have already attained*, or wherein we are already agreed, *Let us walk by that same Rule, Let us mind that* chiefly, Let us Unite therein. *As for things, wherein we differ in our Sentiments, if we*

follow

follow this Method God shall, some way or other, Instruct those that Err, as far as will be necessary; as he had before said, in the foregoing Verse. The same exhortation we find, *Rom.* 12. 16. *Rom.* 15. 5, 6, 7. *Gal.* 6. 16. &c. And, 1. *Tim.* 6. 3, 4, 5. He Teacheth, that " if any Man consent not to wholsome *words*, " even *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and to the " Doctrine which is according to Godliness; he is " proud, knowing nothing, but doting about Que- " stions, and strifes of Words, whereof cometh Envy, " Strife, Railings, evil Surmisings, perverse Dispu- " tings of Men of corrupt Minds.

Here he sheweth that several Christians, even then differed in their thoughts about many things, and, for those differences, were inclined to Divisions; but he asserts they ought by no means to divide, and needed not to do it, nor be the Authors of Schism by imposing any thing Magisterially upon one another; seeing that the Christian way of Union, of Peace and Godliness is, as he teacheth them, to consent to *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*; which they do, that content themselves with, and keep to the Terms and Expressions of Scripture, readily joyning and holding Communion with those that actually do so.

And indeed how can we think any other to be the meaning of the Apostle in this matter, when he tells us in other places, " That the Holy Scriptures are able " to make us wise unto Salvation, and are profitable " for Doctrine and Instruction in Righteousness, that " the Man of God may be perfect, and thoroughly *furnished unto all good Works*. (2 Tim. 3. 15, 16, 17.) and we are expressly forbidden to add to, or diminish from the Word of God. " Ye shall not add unto the " Word which I command you, neither shall you " diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the " Commandments of the Lord your God which I " command you, (*Deut.* 4. 2.) " Every word of God

" is pure. Add thou not unto His words, left He re-
" prove thee and thou be found a liar. (*Prov.* 30. 5, 6.)
" I teſtifie unto every Man, if any Man ſhall Add un-
" to theſe things, God ſhall Add unto him the Plagues
" that are written in this Book, (*Rev.* 22. 18.)

Who can receive theſe Oracles, without acknowledging the neceſſity of the *Method of Scripture*, to act according to theſe Doctrines and theſe Injunctions? For if the Word of God is profitable for Inſtruction, and able to make us wiſe unto Salvation; and if it be ſo expreſly forbidden to Add to, or Diminiſh from it; how durſt any that believes this, offer other Terms of Union than the Scripture it ſelf? Therefore, in Sum, he that conſents not to the wholſom words of the Holy Spirit of God, acts expreſly contrary to *Scripture*. "To the
" Law then, and to the Teſtimony: If any ſpeak
" not according to this word, it is a ſign that there
" is no Light in them," as ſaith the Propher, *Iſa.* 8. 20.

And indeed, to what end is it, (if we conſider) that God hath given us his Holy Scriptures? For, in fine, are they not a Perfect and Compleat Rule? We have ſeen what the Word of God ſaith, and what Proteſtants accordingly Profeſs touching theſe points. Now if we believe that the Scriptures are given us to be *the Rule of our Faith and Practice*, and that they are *a plain and a moſt perfect Rule*, (agreeably to what the Word of God witneſſeth of it;) what Plea can we have for our pretending to Add ought thereto, or for our refuſing to approve of the Scriptures for Terms of Union? Do we know how things ought to be regulated or expreſſed, better than He that Dictated them? If there is not any thing ſuperfluous, or any thing wanting and defective in the Scriptures; then let us conclude, that it is our Duty, punctually and exactly to ſtick to them; and let us, conſequently, infer, that *Scripturaliſm* is the only rational and pious *Method*, and

and that alone which is agreeable to the Word of God.

Let us never think therefore of any other Terms of Union, than the *Method of Scripture*; nor ever bear any other, to be Impoſed upon us. Let us not receive Human Traditions, nor the Deciſions and Conjectures of any Man, as the Oracles of the only Wiſe God. Let us not conſent that the Liberty and Conſciences of Chriſtians be oppreſſed; That Unjuſtice and Partiality bear the ſway in the Chriſtian Church; That the Key of Knowledge be taken away from us; That we be not permitted to underſtand the Scripture further than it ſhall pleaſe a few Humorſome Leading Men; nor that Tyrannical Men be allowed at their pleaſure to *quench the light of* Iſrael.

Let us not do to other Men, what we would not they ſhould do unto us. Let us not take that Authority upon us, which we would not be willing they ſhould take upon them. Let us act like Men, *conſiſtently to our Principles.* Let us in good earneſt own the Word of God for a Perfect Rule; and if we have that Reſpect and Veneration that we pretend for that Sacred Word, let us ſhew it by ſticking cloſe to it, and Religiouſly holding to its very Terms; and then we may all Unite.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

The Sum of what may be Objected against the Method of Scripture; *and the Answer to the first Objection.*

THE *Method of Scripture* being thus, expresly, proved to be the only Just and Religious Method of Union; all the Objections that Cavilling Men may form against it can be of no Weight. Nevertheless that we be not in any thing wanting in its Vindication, it being of the greatest Consequence to the Honour and Peace of the Church, to the Security of Truth, the Discharge of every ones Duty, and the Practice of Justice among Christians in Religious Matters, (to which undeniably every one is bound upon his Salvation, and as he will answer it to Almighty God;) we will consider all the Objections that can be made against this Just Method of Union. For as the World is full of an evil Spirit of Contradiction, impatient of any Reform, abhorring any good Proposals, biassed by Prejudice and Partiality, and blinded through Inconsideration and Passion; we may expect many Objections will be raised against our *Method*. It will be said, That it makes the Scriptures a confused heap of ambiguous Words, without any fixt Sense; That the admitting of it reduceth to nothing the Use and Necessity of Synodal Decisions, and Expounding of the Word of God; That it opens the Door to the greatest Confusion as to differences of Opinion in the Church, and that it may Patronize most Errours; That it is not a sufficient Profession of Faith, and that many essential Truths may be thereby endangered to be lost; That it would savour of Indifference in Religion to Communicate

municate with men of different or unknown Opinions, as would be unavoidable, admitting of the *Method of Scripture*; That many excellent parts of Devotion would be omitted, if Christians did absolutely stick to Scriptural Expressions in their Terms of Union; That according to the Principles of *Scripturalism*, all Ecclesiastical Constitution and Discipline would be uncertain, subject to innumerable differences and Controversies, and alterable at the Fancy of every particular Party and Person. In short, That that Expedient is as Impossible or Unpracticable, as it is New and Strange; And that it is of no Use, or at least of no Necessity.

This is all I think that Mens Prejudices may possibly suggest against the *Method of Scripture*. I shall answer these Objections, with the greatest exactness I can, in the same Order that I have set them down.

The first Objection is, That *Scripturalism* seems to be a dishonourable representation of the Word of God, making it nothing but a confused heap of Ambiguous Words without any fixt Sense. The Ground of this Objection is because according to *Scripturalism* no Party has the priviledge Magisterially to determine the Sense of any controverted place of Scripture to their particular Judgment, but such places are to be left in that Latitude which the words are capable of: From whence the *Antiscripturalists* would conclude, that our Method of Union makes the Word of God a confused heap of Ambiguous Expressions. But the Falsity of that conclusion will be fully evinc'd, if it be considered,

1*st*. That the *greatest part* of what is contained in Scripture is uncontroverted and unanimously agreed of by Christians, especially *Protestants*.

2*d*. That in general what is *necessary to Salvation* is sufficiently clear and plain in the Sacred Writings; so that the Sense thereof may certainly, with God's Grace

Grace, be discerned there, by all that sincerely Study them.

3*d*. That there being some places *hard to be understood* (such being granted to be) in Scripture, makes it not therefore a heap of ambiguous Words, no more than the like doth other Ancient Books, wherein, tho' most accurately written, some Difficulties may be met with. But,

Lastly, That the holding it to be unreasonable that any Party should take upon them to determine Controverted places to their particular Judgment, supposeth only Men to be Fallible, and that there is no Reason to trust any Fallible Persons to judge and decide for others in Matters whereupon depends the Salvation of every Man's Soul; but that every one is to judge for himself.

Thus in the representation which *Scripturalism* makes of the Holy Scriptures, there is nothing dishonourable to them; all that *Scripturalism* implies, being not, (as we have seen,) that they are a heap of Ambiguous Expressions, but that there are difficulties in some passages thereof, which may be misunderstood, if their meaning be not sufficiently attended unto, and which therefore (tho' undoubtedly they be susceptible of a very good Sense, and of one Sense more than of another, yet) it is not safe nor fit, for the Reasons mention'd, that they be Magisterially determin'd by any Party, but every one must have free liberty to Study them, and determine the Sense thereof for himself only, understanding (I do not say those Ambiguous, but) those difficult places according to his own Judgment, not being bound upon any account whatsoever, therein implicitly to rely upon, or submit to the Judgment of others.

All this, which is all that is implyed in the *Method of Scripture*, is Pious and Rational, and is actually the very Principles of Protestants, as abundantly appears by what we have seen on that particular in the Eighth

Chapter

Chapter of this Treatiſe. And according to this Method of leaving the Scripture in its own Latitude in our Terms of Union, not determining it one for another; far from doing any thing diſhonourable to God or to his Word, Men in this matter act in Humility and the Fear of God, with all due regard to the Oracles of the Holy Ghoſt, and with the greateſt tenderneſs for the Truth: That *Method*, in fine, exerciſeth our Induſtry and Vertue, and infallibly puts us in the way (if we ſincerely follow it) of diſcerning all that is neceſſary that we ſhould diſcern in order to Salvation; whereas no other *Method* doth all this, but the *Method of Scripture*, as we have ſhewn. Evidently therefore every Man, for his own ſelf and no further, is to fix the Senſe of difficult places: He is to underſtand them according to the beſt Light he can have: He muſt uſe all the means of Inſtruction poſſible; and when he has done, in Sincerity and Conſcience, what he can to have the moſt exact underſtanding of difficult Texts, he may (nay muſt) impart his Diſcoveries and Notions to others, but muſt not pretend to impoſe them on any Man, nor go about to make them in any meaſure neceſſary, as the Oracles of God; himſelf being but a Man, (and, ſo, it being poſſible for him to be miſtaken,) and others having the ſame right to judge for themſelves, as he for himſelf. And what I ſay of one Man, is to be underſtood of any Men in the plural Number; no Company of Men, no more than any one Man, being infallible, and every Man having as much right to judge for himſelf, as any number of Men for themſelves.

God requires ſincerity of Heart, indiſpenſibly, from every one of us, as the ground-work of our Religion. And he will try and exerciſe our Sincerity, as he doth all our Vertues. That is the reaſon that he has thought fit to put things in no greater Evidence than they are in the Scriptures. He willeth that we inquire into, and

ſearch

search things carefully and diligently, to give proof of our Sincerity. And if we thus sincerely Study the Word of God, that is, with all the care and diligence we are capable of, we acquit our selves of our Duty in this matter, and cannot fail to discover what is absolutely necessary that we should know and do; for the Gospel-Covenant is too merciful to require more of us than we are able.

It was then for our Sincerity that God made Work, and prepared Exercise, when the Holy Ghost Dictated the Scriptures in the Stile we have them in; and when he exhorted us (nor to submit our Faith to the Faith of others, or require others to submit their Faith to ours, but:) to *Watch* and *Pray*, take heed to our selves, and examine the Spirits *whether they be of God*, to *prove all things*, and *hold fast that which is Good*, whatever Men say or do.

If we were to submit to the Authority and Decisions of any Men, if we were to receive their *Comment* on the Word of God as Sacredly as the *Text*, and if there was any other Just Terms of Union than *Scripturalism*; how (consistently) could these cautions have been given us of Watching, Examining and Judging for our selves? Can we have the Liberty to determine our Judgment as we see Cause, and hold that fast which to us seemeth best, and yet be bound to rely upon and submit to the Authority of other Men? What if our Judgment differ from theirs? Then, certainly, we must captivate our Understanding to their Authority; or we must say that their pretended Authority is Unjust and Tyrannical, and a wicked and most damnable Usurpation over the Liberties and Consciences of Christians.

Thus we must either take up the Principles of Popery, have recourse to that very Method of Authority which we have so often, and with so much strength and evidence Impeached, (which to oppose and overthrow

is

is all along the constant business of this Discourse,) and deny the utility of examining; or we must allow of that Liberty, not in Word but in Deed, and consequently acknowledge that no Men are to impose their Comments on other Men, and that God makes the necessity of knowing all Truths depend (not on the Judgment of others, but) on our own understanding, and the opportunities of Knowledge and Instruction that he puts into our Hands. And so, if no Man is to Judge for others, no one is to fix the Sense of controverted places of Scripture for other Men, and consequently the Scripture must be left, in its own Latitude, to every ones Judgment of Discretion; as it appears that it is necessary it should be, for the tryal of our Vertue and of our Sincerity: Whereas if we were to submit to the Judgment and Decisions of other Men, nothing could be incumbent on us but an implicit Faith and a blind Submission, and no room were left for the exercise of our sincere Industry, Care and Diligence, or for the proof of our real Concernment in duly Instructing our selves in all Weighty and Important Truths, and the great affairs of our Salvation. Difficulties then, and some Expressions *hard to be understood* are left in the Scriptures, on purpose to discern those that are *Unstable* and wilfully *Ignorant*, from those that are sincerely desirous to know God's Will, and to do it. It is the design of God, that Men should make use of their Reason, and of their Application to discover (with his never failing Assistance, to them that constantly ask it by Prayer,) where the Truth is, and what that is which is necessary to be believed.

If God had left all Truths in such an Evidence that the most careless and the most wicked Persons could not but forthwith be certain of them, without Study, (as it would be if there was a visible Authority of Men to whose Judgment we should constantly submit;) where would

would be the praiſe-worthineſs of Faith? Faith then would be but a dry ſelf-evident knowledge, in which there would be no more Vertue or Choice than in believing, or rather knowing that Five and Two make Seven. But if, as Proteſtants hold, God has eſtabliſhed no ſuch Authority of Men to whoſe Deciſions we muſt ſubmit our Judgment; then 'tis plain he has thought fit to leave a poſſibility of erring, to try whether Men will take pains to learn his Will, and their Duty. For if there be no Party appointed by God to judge of Controverſies for other Men, every one neceſſarily muſt judge for himſelf as well as he can. And if every one is to judge for himſelf, as I ſaid, it follows that the Scripture muſt be left (Articles of Peace notwithſtanding) in all the Latitude that it is capable of, and conſequently muſt not be reſtrained Magiſterially by any Men to their own Senſe. For if the Scripture be ſo reſtrained by any pretended Authority, it is evident, Men have no more liberty to judge for themſelves. And if any be allowed Magiſterially to decide, not only there will be no room left (as we have ſhewn) for Mens exerciſing themſelves in the Study of God's Word, and making proof of their Sincerity in uſing all means poſſible for a right underſtanding thereof; but at the ſame time, places capable of ſeveral Senſes being reſtrained to one, and made capable of one Senſe only, the nature of the Scriptures ſhall actually be changed, by Men pretending to expreſs the Scriptures better than the Holy Ghoſt, while (if theſe pretended Judges are not infallible) the true meaning of the Word of God ſhall poſſibly be Condemned, and hindred to be received by others; the Conſciences and Liberties of Chriſtians ſhall be oppreſt under the cruelleſt Tyranny, while Proud, Conceited Men ſhall preſumptuouſly ſubſtitute their Comments inſtead of the Oracles of God; and the Holy Scriptures ſhall be Blaſphemouſly Detracted and Defamed,

as

as if but uncertain in themselves and ambiguous, except some Men have authority Magisterially to Interpret them for the rest of Mankind, and prefer their own Decisions before the Scripture it self.

Thus they that oppose the *Method of Scripture*, and will be Judges and Determiners of Controversies, expressly assert that the Scripture is but a heap of ambiguous Words, and that in it self, without their decisive help, it is a *Leaden Rule*, and like a *Nose of Wax*, and these Men cry that *Scripturalists* (who hold that the Scriptural Expressions are the best for all the ends of Religion, and that the Scriptures are a Compleat and Perfect Rule,) make a dishonourable Representation of the Word of God. *Quis tulerit Gracchos de seditione querentes?* Who can bear Blasphemers, accusing others of Blasphemy?

What implies *Scripturalism* (say they) but the bark or outside of Religion, and what are mere words, but an idle and sensless Cant? What is the Scripture in it self, but as it were a dead Letter? May not several *Scripturalists* draw the Scriptures to quite different Senses, and yet therein do nothing contrary to the Principles of *Scripturalism*? May not some understand the Scripture, for instance, like the *Remonstrants*, and be true *Scripturalists*? And others understand the same Scripture like the *Contraremonstrantes*, and be *Scripturalists* too? If then the same Method equally warrants different Interpretations, what doth it but make indeed the Scripture like to a *Nose of Wax* and a *Leaden Rule*, which may be drawn of any side, and be capable of any Form? Whereas if the Scriptures are determined to their true Sense exclusively to all others, they will then appear significative, and will be a fixt and certain Rule.

Thus they revile and vilifie the Scripture, and prefer the Comments and Decisions of Men before it. But we have exposed that Folly and Impiety, and have

shewn that the Scripture is a sufficient Rule of Faith and Practice to every ones Conscience, and cannot be determined, more than it is in it self, without dangerous Consequences. If it was nevertheless supposed most expedient that it were determined; yet (as we have observed) who should do it? We have manifestly seen that that Authority cannot be ascribed to any Party whatsoever. But what necessity is there that it be Magisterially Interpreted by one Party or other? Is *all that is absolutely necessary to Salvation (quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus est creditum)* an idle and senseless Cant, and the meer Bark of Religion? And doth it follow that the Holy Scriptures must be called a *Leaden Rule*, and that the Word of God must be compared to a *Nose of Wax*, because there are in it some difficult passages, to try Mens Industry and Sincerity, and perhaps to try how Soberly and Reverently Men will speak and judge of the Divine Oracles? In fine, Is that Book as it were a dead Letter, which, because there may occur some difficulties therein, is in some places understood differently by several Persons; when yet of all hands it is acknowledged that there is reason, when things are duly considered, to understand those places in one Sense rather than in another, altho' no Party have right to decide Magisterially of the same? That matter may be thus cleared, by a plain comparison. There are several Comments on many Books; upon *Horace*, for Instance: those Comments are sometimes very different; and yet none is preferred, by any Decisive Authority, before the other, but they are, with the Text, equally left to every Man's free Judgment: Doth it therefore follow that *Horace* is a dead Insignificant Letter, a heap of Ambiguous words, without any Sense? To make it a Book of Reason and Sense, is it necessary that any Authority intervene, and Magisterially determine all places therein that are capable of divers significations, not allowing

lowing Criticks the liberty to understand them otherwise? That were exceeding Impertinent. It is sufficient that the Book in it self is well written, and is generally intelligible when read with Care and Application. It is true there are in it some difficult passages; what then? if they must be Magisterially Interpreted, who shall do it; for, why should one have that Right, more than another? It follows therefore that every one must Interpret those passages for himself, and be content that they be left to the Judgment of others, as well as to his own; but no Critick is to Usurp the Authority of Imposing his Interpretations on the World, nor ought in Reason to desire it. Altho' a Book be variously understood, by several Persons; that is no disparagement to that Book. For those places that are controverted, whereas they seem susceptible of divers Senses, may yet more reasonably be taken in one Sense rather than in any other, tho' that be not, for good and wise Reasons, to be Magisterially determined. The conclusion then is, that the Book in it self may be Excellent, and as Intelligible as is requisite, and can be expected; That, In short, to understand it, there needs no Magisterial Determinations, and that all the difficult places therein are to be left to every ones particular Judgment.

All this may be applyed to the *Scripturalists* Method of Interpreting *Scripture*. The Latitude that *Scripturalists* leave the Scripture in, (whilst they determine it not Magisterially, but allow the liberty to every one to interpret it for himself,) doth no more dishonour Scripture, than the like Latitude, in which all other Books are Universally left, dishonours them. It appears therefore that *Scripturalism* makes no unworthy representation of the Word of God; and that the Word of God hath in it self a fixt and certain Sense, tho' no one may Magisterially determine it.

CHAP. XIV.

The Answer to the Second Objection.

THE Second Objection against the *Method of Scripture* is, That the admitting of it reduceth to nothing the Use and Necessity of Synodal Decisions, and of Expounding the Word of God; As if the asserting Scripture to be a sufficient and compleat Rule, implied that it needs in no manner to be Explained one place by another; and that Confusion and Disorder must necessarily thereby be introduced in the Church. But to obviate these mistakes, we expressly profess that it is the Duty of Ministers to Instruct in the Word of God, those that are committed to their Charge, and to endeavour with all Care possible, to shew them by clear Proofs and good Evidence the true Sense of it; and that it is the Peoples part, Attentively and Seriously to hearken to the Instructions of their Teachers, and in Sincerity and the Fear of God, to compare the same with what is written in the Holy Scriptures. Then in Order to Unity, we allow of Articles of Peace, as far as they are consistent with the *Method of Scripture*; and no *Protestants*, keeping to their Principles, can admit of any thing more here.

We know it might create Disorder and Confusion, if Teachers were indifferently permitted, publickly to maintain any particular Interpretations and particular Sentiments; for that might often cause publick contentions, and reflexions of Teachers upon one another, which undoubtedly instead of edifying, would be a Scandal to the People.

But on the other hand, by the Liberty that is allowed the Church to set terms of Peace, it is not meant

meant that the People muſt never hear, nor ever be permitted to receive any other Senſe of Scripture, but what may pleaſe the majority of their Leaders and Guides. That were to fall into the other Extream, which is moſt Dangerous, and doth not differ from the Anti-chriſtian Tyranny of the Church of *Rome*. For then the Miniſters of the Church would act as if they were Infallible; and thereby, as we have ſeen, they would oppreſs the Conſciences of Chriſtians, and poſſibly immortalize ſome Errors, and render the acknowledgment of ſome (perhaps) Important Truths for ever impoſſible, diſcouraging, blunting, and putting a ſtop to the Induſtry of thoſe that Study the Scriptures, hindering and cropping the diſcoveries that might be yet further made.

There muſt be therefore neceſſarily a mean betwixt theſe. And it can be no other than that which is agreeable to the Principles of *Scripturaliſm*: That is, that in explaining difficult Points and obſcure Paſſages of Scripture, Teachers fairly repreſent the Reaſons that can be brought for the ſeveral Senſes that the matter may be capable of, and ſo leave it to the Judgment of the hearers.

This Expedient is ſubject to no danger or inconvenience, to which the others are liable. For by that means, Wranglings and Controverſies ſhall be ſuperſeded, only the Truth ſhall be fairly examin'd, and the People enabled to Judge rightly for themſelves; which they could not be, if they were merely to be acquainted with what ſuited to the Notions of the Majority of their Leaders, or if Teachers, on the other hand, were allowed to raiſe Contentions and Diſturbances, and create confuſion with in themſelves.

All that miſchief will be infallibly prevented, if it be provided agreeably to *Scripturaliſm*, that the People may have an Impartial repreſentation of the probable Senſes of Scripture; which Teachers may do, with-

our taking party against any Articles that can be proposed by the Principles of *Protestants*, and which (as I said) are to be looked upon as *Articles of Peace*.

Another principal Use of Synods is to regulate matters of Discipline; and to that end, unquestionably, they are absolutely necessary, as also (as much as in them lieth) to reform abuses, &c.

But that Synods should make Determinations, binding the Faith of Christians, and which the People must absolutely submit their Judgment to, is a notion, as we have observed, too expressly contradictory to the very Foundation of the *Reformed* Religion, for any *Protestants* to admit thereof, if they act consistently to themselves. For we have seen that the Principles of *Protestants* imply that no Man, or Body of Men, is to be *Judge of Controversies*, but that every one is to *Judge for himself*. And the reasons why no Person, or Persons whatsoever are to *Determine Magisterially* for other Men, we have insisted upon in the 3d, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th Chapters. The Sum whereof is, that Men being not Infallible, but it being possible for them to overlook the Truth, and to be biassed against it, no Man is to trust another for the inquiries of Religion, but it is a Duty incumbent on every one to Examine and Judge, himself, according to his abilities, and the means of Instruction God has put in his Power. So that for any, after this, to make Magisterial *Decisions*, and assume the Authority to *Impose* them on other Men, is shamefully to deviate from the *Protestant* Grounds, rashly and presumptuously to arrogate to themselves a priviledge they have no Title to, Tyrannically to do to others, what they could not bear that others should do to them, Irreligiously to Invade the just Rights, and cut off the reasonable Liberties of Christians, barbarously to oppress the Consciences, Diabolically to attempt upon the Vertue, and so wound the Souls of Men, and Impiously to run the hazard of injuring Innocence,

nocence, of perſecuting the Truth, of taking away the Key of Knowledge, and of being found to fight againſt God, and reſiſt his Holy Spirit.

But perhaps it will be ſaid, Tho' we be not Infallible; yet, can we not be certain that we have the Truth? And when the ſeveral Members of a Venerable Synod, made up of the moſt Pious, the moſt Learned, and the Chief Leaders and Guides, are *certain* that they have Truth of their ſide; would it not be unreaſonable to deny them Power preciſely to define what are the neceſſary Truths, which all that will be Saved muſt receive? Nay, if the Church is, certainly, Orthodox, is it not her Duty, as ſhe is concerned in the welfare of her Children, ſo to expreſs neceſſary Truths, (which ſhe is certain are ſuch,) and enforce them on her Members, for the Spiritual Good of their Souls, that no one may, ignorantly or wilfully reject them, when if Men were left to the Scripture only, they might wreſt it to a falſe Senſe? I anſwer,

1*ſt*. There are ſeveral degrees of Evidence; and Men can be truly certain that they are in the right, when they have ſuch clear and undeniable Evidence for what they hold, that it would be *a palpable contradiction to Senſe and Reaſon to think otherwiſe*.

2*d*. Having ſincerely examined a Propoſition, which is not of *that firſt degree of Evidence*, but is liable to great difficulties, if they find more reaſon for, than againſt it, they do well to believe it; they may be certain that they find their Reaſons perſuaſive, that they do what they can to Judge rightly, that if they err, it is not their fault, and that therefore they are ſafe. But,

3*d*. The certainty or perſuaſion of a Man, or Body of Men, doth not therefore perſuade other Men, or make them certain; becauſe Men are fallible, and ſo (in caſes that are not of *the firſt degree of Evidence*)

when they think themselves certain that they are in the right, it is possible they are mistaken. It may be they pass too hasty a Judgment before they have duely considered all things, and that they determine themselves by Presumption, Prejudice, or the like.

4th. God doth not allow Men to make Religious Reflexions and Determinations, one Man for another, or that the Conscience of one be regulated by another's Conscience: It will not suffice thee, that I have to my power examined matters of Religion, and that I am satisfied with the Notions I have of them; thou canst not in Conscience entertain my Notions, except thou beest thy self perswaded of the Truth of them, as I am; that is, except thou actually findest (as I do) that the Grounds and Reasons of my Notions are perswasive and truly convincing. Therefore a Man's certainty, or his being satisfied in his Mind that he is certain, serves only for himself, and is no Ground of certainty or perswasion for others, but every one must stand on his own bottom, and cannot indeed believe otherwise, than as he is perswaded in his own Conscience; that is, as he inwardly feels and sees Reasons for, or against the thing to be believed or disbelieved.

5th. What perswades one Man, doth not always perswade another, tho' both be equally Careful and Sincere in the Search of Truth; Men often looking differently upon things, whether it come from difference of Capacities, or the like: However it is certain, in the Judging of Men for their Opinions, God will consider whether they have carefully made use, as they might, of the means he has given them to Instruct themselves aright, and have not carelesly pinned, as it were, their Faith to that of other Men.

6th. We have seen that neither Learning, nor any other Qualifications of Men ought to prejudice us in favour

favour of their Opinions, but that we are impartially to examine the Opinions themselves.

7th. We have seen likewise that tho' Men held actually the Truth, yet they have never the more Right to be Magisterial Judges of Controversies, and to Impose their Determinations on other Men; first, because every one is to Judge for himself; and also because, if that Principle was admitted that those who have the Truth have thereby Right to force other Men to receive their Decisions, it would necessarily throw all things into confusion; for then every one, firmly believing that what he holds is the Truth, would endeavour to Impose his Faith upon his Neighbour by any means.

8th. It would be very dishonourable to the Scriptures, and to the Holy Ghost that Dictated them, to think that in themselves they were not sufficient savingly to Instruct Sincere Persons, who diligently make use of all the means of Instruction, but that they were so Ambiguous and Obscure, that this it would yet be impossible for Sincere Men sufficiently to understand them, and that they would not be safe, if their Sense was not more determined than it is in the Text.

9th. It appears that it was not God's design to make such a provision that it were impossible to Err. It is enough that " the Scriptures are able to make us wise " unto Salvation, 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. *Jam.* 1. 21. and that they *are profitable for Doctrine, for Instruction*, &c. 2 *Tim.* 3. 16.

Lastly, The business of the Church is not to Force and Compel, but to Teach and Instruct by Reason and Persuasion. And, as we have seen, that is the only *Method* that is agreeable to the Principles of *Protestants*; for if you suppose that a Church has *Authority* to make Magisterial Determinations, and to Impose them on her Members; then you establish that *Tyranny* which

which the Reformers have so much Exclaimed against; you necessarily receive the Expositions of the Church as infallible Oracles, prefer her Comment before the Text of Scripture, and actually set up the *Inquisition*. To assert therefore that every one may and must Examine and Judge for himself, and yet to frame at the same time Unscriptural Articles, and Magisterially Impose them on others; is to Talk like a *Protestant*, and Act like a *Papist*. It is to lay down in Words the Principles of *Scripturalism*, and in Deeds to Vilifie and Subvert the Use of Holy *Scripture*, and hold it as a *Nose of Wax*, and a *Leaden Rule*.

If it be Objected, that nevertheless Councils have always done that which I here argue against, and that the first Council was Composed of the Apostles themselves, who have left this Pattern in the Christian Church: I answer, that no Councils were of equal Authority with that of the Apostles; that *the Apostles were Extraordinarily and Immediately Inspired of God, for the Establishment of the Church, when the Canon of Scripture was not yet perfected*; and that it was never intended, nor any reason given to think that Fallible Men afterwards should have the same Rights with the Apostles. And it is not to be thought, that any of the Primitive Councils were so presumptuous as to esteem their Decisions as binding to the Conscience, as the very Word of God. If they meant any more than to propose, what they judged to be the Truth, as *Articles of Peace* in the Church, they were surely wrong. But the Primitive Creeds, and particularly that which is peculiarly Denominated *Apostolical*, seem expressed in a Latitude, in a great measure agreeable to the *Method of Scripture*. Howbeit, this is indisputable, and to this we may stick, that the Fundamental Principle of *Protestants* in General, as we have observed, is, *That the Holy Scripture is the Compleat and Perfect Rule of Faith*. Whatever be the Parties

or

or Persons that say it, it is certain it is the unanimous Voice and Mind of *Protestants*; the Reformation being inconsistent with any other Principles than *Scripturalism*.

We believe then, that God has Revealed and Taught us his Will in the Holy Scriptures with strictest Command to reject all other Traditions. According to what St. *Paul* saith, (Galat. i. 8.) *If we, or an Angel from Heaven should preach another Gospel, let him be accursed*; and according to what we find, *Deut.* 4. 2. and *Rev.* 22. 18, 19.

With good and Religious Reason therefore all *Protestant* Churches with one Consent, and particularly the *Church of England* in her 39 Articles, *Art.* 6. 19. 20, 21. and elsewhere, maintain these Two Points, as the main Principles of Religion: That the Rule of true Religion is the Word of God only; and that their Faith ought not to be an Implicit Faith, that is, to believe, tho' as the Church believes, against or without express Authority of Scripture.

And if all *Protestants*, as Universally as they hold these Two Principles, so attentively and Religiously would observe them, they would avoid and cut off all the Debates and Contentions, Schisms and Persecutions, which hitherto in any measure have been among them.

For hence it directly follows, That no true *Protestant* can Persecute or not Tolerate his fellow *Protestant* (tho' dissenting from him in the understanding of difficult places of Scripture) but he must flatly deny and renounce these two his own main Principles, whereon Religion is founded; while he would force his Brother from that which he believes to be the Word of God to an Implicit Faith, (which he himself Condemns) to the endangering of his Brother's Soul, whether by rash belief, or dissimulation and hypocritical compliance.

It is therefore the general consent of all sound *Protestant* Writers, that neither Traditions, Councils nor Canons,

Canons, of any visible Church, but the *Scripture* only can be the final Judge or Rule in matters of Religion, and that only *in the Conscience of every Christian to himself*; which *Protestation*, made by the first publick *Reformers*, gave first beginning to the Name of *Protestant*; and with that Name hath ever been received this Doctrine, which prefers the Scripture before the Church, and acknowledges none but the *Scripture* sole Interpreter of it self to the Conscience.

" The Foundation and Rule of our Religion, is the " Word of God, contained in the Holy Scriptures; " to which Christians in all Ages have appealed, as " the *only Rule* of Faith and Life:" saith the Late Archbishop *Tillotson*. Sermons *of Sincerity and Constancy*, &c. P. 189.

The ready way to Determine (that is to say, to end) *Controversies, is for every one not to prescribe to others, or to Persecute; for then Men would more calmly see the Truth and consent*: saith the Learned Dr. *Barrow*. Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy. P. 219.

" All who receive the Scripture for the only Rule, " and believe what is there plain, to be only necessary, " would (if they truly believed what they profess'd, " and were not led aside, either by prejudice, or some " Popish Relicks of holding what they have been long " taught or following the Authority of some Persons, " either a live or dead, by them much esteemed) soon " agree *in as much as is necessary*, and in concluding *no necessity of agreeing in more*, there being no doubt but " it would soon appear plainly what is plain." *The Lord* Faulkland's *Reply to* White's *Answer*, &c.

" The Professors of Christianity should labour for " the true Spirit and temper of Christians, and then " it would be as well with the Christian World, as if " we were all of one Mind; that is, they should not " Magisterially Impose upon one another, but be so " Charitable as to believe well of all that Dissent from

" us

" us, when they *receive the Scriptures as well as we*, " live good Lives, and are *of a modeſt and peaceable De-* " *portment.*" Free Diſcourſe of Moderate Divines. P. 308.

" It is a piece of Tyranny, too near a kin to that of " cruel *Procruſtes*, for any to endeavour to force o- " thers to be juſt of their pitch and ſize in Opinions, " and to approve of their *Sentiments*. Ibid. P. 309, &c.

" If we would keep the Unity of the Church, we " ſhould obſerve the Rule of Faith, and Chari- " ty. The Rule of Faith requiring that we con- " tain our ſelves within the bounds of the Word " of God, propoſing no Doctrine to be follow'd, but " that which *is expreſſed in that Word*, nor ſpeaking " *otherwiſe than that ſpeaks*: and this the Chriſtian " Faith requires; for Faith cometh by hearing, and hear- ing by the Word of God. *Zanchy*'s Oration, after the Compoſure of the difference betwixt him and *A- merbachius*: Sect. 13. And ſo *Acontius*, in his 7th Book of the Stratagems of Satan.

And our excellent Dr. *Stillingfleet*, the Late Right Reverend Biſhop of *Worceſter*, (in his Anſwer to ſeve- ral Treatiſes, occaſioned by a Book of his Entituled, *A Diſcourſe concerning the Idolatry practiſed in the Church of Rome*, &c. in the firſt Part, P. 269, 270.) ſpeaking of one of the particulars in which he eſteems to conſiſt the Au- thority that belongs to the Governours of the Church, and having ſhewn it to be this of meeting together, for Reforming any abuſes, either in Practice or Do- ctrine, declaring what thoſe abuſes are, and requiring a conſent to ſuch Propoſitions as are agreed upon for that end, of thoſe who are to enjoy the Publick Offi- ces of Teaching and Inſtructing others: He adds, That that is " not to the End that all thoſe Propoſiti- " ons ſhould be believed as *Articles of Faith*; but be- " cauſe no Reformation can be effected, if Perſons " may be allowed to Preach and Officiate in the

" Church

" Church in a way contrary to the design of such a Re-
" formation.

And the same Doctor, in the same Book, Answering what his Popish Adversary had Objected, " That " his Principles afforded no effectual way or means of " Suppressing or Convicting any Schism, Sect or Here-" sy, and that therefore the Doctor's Principles were de-" structive to all Church Authority; speaks thus in the 286th and following Pages: "I would know what he un-" derstands by his *effectual means of suppressing Sects or* " *Heresies*. We are sure the mere Authority of their " Church has been no more *effectual means* than that " of ours has been; but there is another means they " use which is more *effectual*, namely, the *Inquisition*. " This in Truth is all the *effectual means* they have " above us; but God keep us from so Barbarous and " Diabolical a means of Suppressing Schisms: The " *Sanbenits* have not more Pictures of Devils upon " them, than the *Inquisition* it self has of their Spirit " in it. --But if this be the effectual means he under-" stands, I hope he doth not think it any credit to the " Authority of their Church, that all who Dispute it, " must endure a most miserable Life, or a most cruel " Death. All the other means they have are but pro-" bable; but this, this is the most *effectual*. How " admirably do Fire and Fagots end Controversies! " No General Council signifies half so much, as a " Court of Inquisition; and the Pope himself is not " near so good a Judge of Controversies as the Ex-" ecutioner; and *Dic Ecclesiæ* is nothing to, *Take him* " *Goaler*. These have been the Kind, the Tender, " the Primitive, the Christian means of Suppressing " Sects and Heresies in the *Roman* Church. *O how* " *pleasant a thing it is for Brethren to be destroyed for* " *lack of Unity! How beautiful upon the Seven Moun-* " *tains are the feet of those who shed the Blood of He-*

" *retick!*

" rotick? Never were there two Men had a more Ca-
" tholick ſpirit, than *Diocleſian* and Biſhop *Bonner*."

It is then plain, according to the Principles of *Proteſtants*, that thoſe that propoſe Articles, that are not in the very Expreſſions of Scripture, otherwiſe than as *Articles of Peace*, and require a more abſolute aſſent to them than with this reſerve, *in ſo far as they agree with the Word of God*, (an outward or privative *Aſſent*, being not refus'd, but yielded unto, for Peace and Union ſake;) they that are ſo preſumptuous, I ſay, as thus to ſet up themſelves as Magiſterial Judges and Interpreters of Scripture, are Spiritual Tyrants and Uſurpers, how true ſoever their Notions may otherwiſe be.

As for Profeſſions of Faith, or Practices that are *not evidently* agreeable to Scripture, and that would be very dangerous in caſe the Places that are thought to warrant them were miſunderſtood and really implyed no ſuch thing; no Church, according to the *Method of Scripture* or the Principles of *Proteſtants*, can have Juſt Authority to Impoſe them on her Members, tho' even but as Articles of Peace.

So that the ſafeſt way, as *Acoſtius* obſerves, is that all Articles be moſtly compriſed in the expreſs words of *Scripture*, or in the words which *that Holy Spirit, which by our Lord was promiſed to Teach us all things*, was pleaſed to make uſe of. For ſeeing all *Reformed* Churches do agree in this, that *all things neceſſary to Salvation are clearly and fully comprehended in the Holy Scripture*; and we in making of Articles have no deſign, but clearly to expreſs our Minds touching the chief Points of Chriſtian Faith; ſince we can do this in the words of *Scripture*, which we profeſs to be perſpicuous in matters of this nature, why ſhould we rather chooſe to ſpeak in our own words, than in the words of the Holy Ghoſt? Do we think our ſelves more Cautious than he was, or can we better See than he, what

what is obnoxious to a dangerous Interpretation, and what not? If we dare not be guilty of so rash and Blasphemous an Affirmation, why do we choose to Minister to Sophisters occasions for Cavil, by preferring our own words before them? In fine, it is better, in such Cases, to stick to the Words of God, and to use the Words of Scripture, than to use our own; First, because we otherwise, indulging to our own Understandings, may Insert some things as certain Truths, and necessary to be known, which are neither True nor Necessary: Or Secondly, our words being liable to the exceptions of Cavillers, which can hardly be avoided, it may so happen that he who would with readiness embrace the Doctrine delivered in the words of Scripture, may suspect our Expressions, and be tempted to reject what otherwise he would Embrace.

CHAP. XV.

The Answer to the Third Objection.

THE Third Objection is, That if *Protestants* agree upon the Terms of *Scripturalism*, they may disagree in every thing else, and the Door will then be Open to all Differences of Opinion; which must needs occasion the greatest Confusion and Disorder in the Church.

Now if it be meant that the admitting of the *Method of Scripture* necessarily causes Men to differ, in things most essential, or allows them to raise Contentions about their Differences and particular Sentiments; I answer, that it is a Mistake, as may appear by what has been said. But if it be only meant that the *Method of Scripture* doth not Compel Men to be inwardly

ly perſuaded of; nor abſolutely to ſubmit their Judgment to the Opinion of others, but gives them liberty to believe as they ſee cauſe themſelves, provided they make no Buſtle and cauſe no Diſturbance with their Opinion; I ſay, in general, not only that *therein there is nothing particular, which is not likewiſe actually incident upon any other Method*, but that it is *neceſſary in it ſelf that it ſhould be ſo*, and that *God has not thought fit to conſtrain Men to be exactly of the ſame Opinion* in all things. To give then a diſtinct anſwer to this Objection, we muſt make theſe Conſiderations.

1ſt. It muſt be obſerved, that thoſe who Religiouſly receive the Holy Scripture as the Dictates of God, who Sincerely Study it to the beſt of their Power, according to the Opportunities and means of Inſtruction which they have, and who readily Embrace whatſoever they can ſee reaſon to judge is Taught there; can upon no account be blamed, if in their thoughts they happen to differ from other Men, and therefore cannot juſtly be Rejected or Condemned by them. But,

2dly, We muſt conſider, what by the prudence of a Church is particularly to be avoided about differences of Opinions, is the Tumultuous and *Contentious Diſputing of Teachers againſt one another in publick Aſſemblies*; for that would make different Parties, and occaſion Diſorder and Scandal: Therefore no well Conſtituted Church, ever permitted it, but always reſtrained ſuch *Differences*. And undoubtedly that is what our Church deſigned, in the framing of her Canons and Articles, *to avoid diverſities of Opinion*, as the Title thereof bears; that is, to hinder Teachers from maintaining contrary Opinions, and Diſputing one againſt another, which is expreſly prohibited by a Canon. But aſſuredly our Church doth not (and no *Proteſtant* Church can reaſonably) pretend to bind the Conſciences of her Members to ſubmit to her Judge-

ment, or Magisterially to prescribe them what they shall, or shall not believe. For,

3*dly*, It is here to be minded, that it would even be contradictory to the *Protestant* Principles, as we have shewn, not to allow every one the liberty to Judge for himself, and that thereby they would unavoidably set up the *Popish* Inquisition. *Protestants* actually profess that it is a Right that equally belongs to all Men, to examine and to believe, according to the Grounds of Credibility which they find. And that that is in it self necessary, and even that it is necessary that Men impartially represent to one another the Grounds of things, as with careful Examination they discover them, We may,

4*thly*, Consider; and we shall observe it to be so, particularly for these two Reasons. 1. Because *Reason is the Foundation of Certainty*, (or of a well grounded Persuasion,) *and no Man can have greater Certainty, than he has Evidence* for any object of Faith. Therefore Men must needs believe, according as they find Evidence or see Reason to Determine their Belief or Persuasion. As *it is a shame to answer a matter before a due hearing of it*, (Prov. 18. 13.) so it were perfect rashness and folly to judge a thing Credible, without seeing Reasonable and Credible Grounds for it. 2. No Man's Authority being to Determine our Belief, but only the Evidence, or Reasons and Grounds of Credibility that are found for the things to be believed, (the best Men in themselves being Fallible;) it follows that it is Rational and Necessary, not only that Men should yield to the Evidence and Reasons that they find, altho' in their conceptions of things, they did happen to differ never so much from other Men, but also that they be allowed (tho' not contentiously and tumultuously to Dispute, yet, as it were without taking Party, not dogmatizing, but Discussing and Examining things,) impartially to represent the Evidence and Reasons

ſons, which they find for, and againſt a thing. For if that was not allowed, the means of true Knowledge and Certainty would be taken away, which God has given us, by due Conſideration, rightly to inform our ſelves of the certainty of Things, Men (not being Infallible, nor knowing all things at once, but) getting Inſtruction in time and by degrees, as they diſcover, by their Induſtry, and the Grace of God, the certain Grounds of Credibility in any matter. To hinder therefore the Fair and Impartial Repreſentation and Diſcuſſion of thoſe Grounds, would be a prophane Diſparaging and wilful Obſtructing of the means of Certainty and of true Information, an abſolute diſcouragement of Learning, and the ſtop of Truth, by *diſuſing our abilities to the ſearch of Knowledge, and forming invincible Obſtacles againſt, and actually ſuppreſſing the diſcoveries that might be made.*

3*thly*, To clear the *Method of Scripture* from the inconvenience that is here objected againſt it, we muſt alſo conſider, as before, that it is not particular to *Scripturaliſm* to make no infallible proviſion againſt Men's diſſenting in their Judgment from one another; except we ſay that the *Method of Scripture* hath been always followed.

There were differences of Opinion among the Ancient Guides and Paſtors of the Chriſtian Church; and in matters of as great Moment, as thoſe are, in which the *Proteſtants*, following their Principles, can be divided in their Sentiments. As between St. *Irenæus* and *Victor*, St. *Cyprian* and *Stephen*, St. *Chryſoſtom* and *Theophilus*, St. *Jerom* and *Ruffinus*, St. *Cyril* and *Theodoret*, the Biſhops of the Council of *Nice*, and thoſe alſo of *Sardica*, &c.

And even there are Diviſions, yea as many among the Learned of the Church of *Rome* it ſelf, notwithſtanding the Magiſterial Authority aſſumed by that Church, as among the *Proteſtants*, who profeſs to Examine, Judge

and Interpret for themſelves, according to the *Method of Scripture*.

6thly, We muſt here again obſerve, that God thinks fit to permit that there be differences of Opinion, to exerciſe the Sincerity and Induſtry of Chriſtians, and diſtinguiſh thoſe that are Vertuouſly diſpoſed and Sincerely careful to learn the Will of God, from thoſe that care not to be at the pains to do it. For ſtill it is abſolutely Mens fault if they do not diſcern the Truth as far as it is neceſſary for them to diſcern it. For,

7thly, We muſt conſider, that differences of Opinions, about things Eſſential, are not owing to the free Reading and Studying of Scripture, or to any Principles of *Scripturaliſts*, but to a partial and imperfect examination of Things. It cannot be doubted but that all neceſſary Truth is attended with ſo much Evidence, as that it may be certainly diſcerned by careful Inquirers, ſo far as it indiſpenſably concerns us to diſcern it; otherwiſe we were not under a Diſpenſation of Grace, or a benign Oeconomy, but under the moſt Rigorous and Tyrannical Laws imaginable. If therefore we ever conſider impartially the Arguments *Pro* and *Con*, as the *Method of Scripture* enjoyns; the beſt Reaſon will then be indubitably Conſpicuous. So that the Principles themſelves of *Scripturaliſm* do not lead to differences of Opinion; but to a real *Conſent* and unanimity in all things neceſſary. But the miſchief is, that few Men regulate themſelves by thoſe juſt Principles, but the generality act by falſe Meaſures, by Inconſideration and Prejudice, ſuffering themſelves to be prepoſſeſſed before due examination. The moſt part Reaſon no better than thus for Inſtance, " Such a one is a Pious and Learned " Perſon, undoubtedly underſtands, and has well Ex- " amined ſuch a Matter; therefore I hold it ſafe, and " every way beſt therein to be of his Opinion." And

ſo

ſo without expreſly admitting of the Principle of *Implicit Faith*, they often ſubmit their Judgment to the *Authority* of other Men. Thus in effect, the Differences of the People, among *Proteſtants*, are very rarely owing to them, but for the moſt part to the different Senſes they in a manner implicitly receive from their Teachers. So that this Objection, and the uſual Practice of thoſe Objectors which I am anſwering, manifeſtly contradict (beſides what we have here already taken notice of) even the firſt Fundamental, and the moſt eſſential Principles of *Proteſtants*; and ſo it cannot be urged by any of them, without overthrowing their own Foundation. For *Proteſtants* in the firſt place Expreſly and Unanimouſly hold, as we have before ſeen, that the Holy Scripture is clear as to all things abſolutely neceſſary; from whence that which I inſiſt upon neceſſarily follows, that *ſuch things will certainly be diſcerned by all Sincere Perſons*, that is, by all that ſincerely do what they are able, rightly and truly to Underſtand the Word of God. As for thoſe that will not be Sincere, no proviſion is made for them: Howbeit as it is expreſſed in the Parable, the *Tares* muſt be *ſuffered* to grow up together with the *Wheat*, otherwiſe the *Wheat* might be happily in danger of being pluck'd up and deſtroyed by Raſh and Violent Perſons, inconſiderately taking it for the *Tares*; but in the time of the *Harveſt*, (at the end of all things,) the *Lord*, that knoweth beſt what is to be done, ſhall ſay to the *Reapers*, (who will not be ſuch as may be guilty of any miſtake), *Gather ye the Tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the Wheat into my Barn*, Mat. 13. 29, 30.

Thus it appears that they are inexcuſable before God, who do not ſo ſearch all neceſſary Truths, as to find them; and that if *Proteſtants* exactly follow the Rules of *Scripturaliſm*, (implied, as we have ſhewn, in their own Principles,) ſincerely Study, and really

allow the Sincere Study of the Word of God; they cannot, with the assisting Grace of God, but find what is so clearly contained there. But,

8*thly*, As for things that are not so absolutely necessary, or wherein the best and sincerest Men may mistake, it is past Dispute, that Christians may well bear one anothers Differences therein. As a Learned Dean of our Church expresseth himself, "There are very "few differing Opinions worth the Contending for. "While the general concernments of Religion and a "good Life are secured, we may be contented that "Men should differ in Nicer Speculations, and it is "a Folly to be discontented at it, for they always "will, and there is no hurt in it." [*A Defence of the knowledge of Jesus.* P. 4.]

Then, In fine, the Differences which may be occasioned by the admitting of *Scripturalism*, are not, as we see, so dangerous as is pretended, in all probability concerning only, as we have shewn, those things that are not the most essential, and absolutely necessary, if, as was said, the Scripture be sincerely and carefully Examin'd, and all the Senses it is capable of, fairly Consider'd, Men being not acted by the heat of Contention, and the prejudice of a Party, but by the fear of God, and pure Love for the Truth. For our *Method* implies, That Teachers shall chiefly insist on things most necessary, (and consequently most clear in Scripture,) and shall make no bustle about their particular Sentiments, if they have any; but that all things shall fairly, to the best of their power, be discussed by all: So that if some do not exactly represent things as they should, it is not to be question'd but that by this means it is so provided that most will do it, and so Christians shall not be in danger of partial representations of things, or to be moved to alter their Opinions at every new wind of Doctrine. Contrariwise, it will be the only way to be Established with

with Knowledge and Certainty in the Truth. If haply thou beeſt not fully ſatisfied with what thou heareſt from One, conſult another, and conſider well thy ſelf, before thou Judge. That is the only Rational and only Religious Method. And if, notwithſtanding the Differences that may be among *Scripturalists*, we behave our ſelves towards one another as Chriſtians ought to do; there is, as we have ſaid, all the reaſon to hope that we ſhall certainly find out all neceſſary Truths: but if we ſuffer our ſelves to be acted by Prejudice and Animoſity, we ſhall be the Authors of all the Miſchief that muſt needs enſue, and ſhall be Infallibly anſwerable for it. And, before God and Men, it is a horrid ſhame (conſidering the Principles we all hold) to do any thing *that in any wiſe diſcountenanceth ſincere ſearchers of Truth* or *a modeſt diſcuſſion of things*, and that *vilifies the general Terms of Scripture*, upon which Chriſtians ſhould Unite. Wo is to them, who in any reſpect are concerned therein, what grounds ſoever they may go upon; as if they could be Authorized to do wickedly, and allowed to Miniſter juſt occaſion to Schiſms, for any pretended Convenience or Good whatſoever. When they come into the other World, they ſhall find, that condemning Scripture and Reaſon in Oppoſing and Condemning *the Method of Scripture*, they have been wilfully and inexcuſably Guilty of the greateſt of all Miſchiefs: And, tho' they inconſiderately conceit to do God and the Church Service, in appearing and acting againſt the Chriſtian Terms of Unity, and aſſuming to themſelves a Magiſterial Authority they have no Title to, on pretence of taking an Effectual way to ſuppreſs Diverſities of Opinions, which agree not with their raſh Judgments; they actually ſhall feel the effects of God's ſevereſt Wrath againſt them, for Rejecting and Blaſpheming the expreſs Terms of the Goſpel, withſtanding and hindering the Peace and Unity of Chriſtians, and raſhly

setting up a Method capable to Immortalize Schisms, and to render (humanely speaking) the discoveries of Truth impossible; unavoidably betraying not only themselves, but likewise their Posterity to Error, if in any respect they happen'd to Err, as themselves grant they may.

CHAP. XVI.

The answer to the Fourth Objection.

THE next Objection being, *That as* Scripturalism *may patronize a great many Errors, so it is not a sufficient Profession of Faith, and that many essential Truths therefore may be endangered thereby to be lost;* What has been said in the last Chapter, doth in a very great measure solve that difficulty. Yet Repetitions, in this Case, in some measure may be warrantable, both for the reason the Apostle useth, *Phil.* 3. 1. and that mentioned in the *Preface* before this Treatise; the same Arguments serving to answer many Objections (that are near a kin,) as it appears. I shall therefore begin here, by saying over again, That the Scripture is clear as to all things absolutely necessary; for hence it follows that it is impossible that Scripture (or the *Method of Scripture*) should patronize any absolutely Essential Errors, when things are fairly discussed, and every one is allow'd to judge for himself, as it must be, agreeably to the Principles of *Protestants*. Indeed if things are suffer'd to be considered but by halves, and Mens Consciences and Judgments are Tyrannically forced, it is a great *Chance* if Truth be hit upon; 'tis only *Certain* Unjust and Unwarrantable

Measures

Measures will be practised. But they must answer for it, who are therein concerned.

Let it be sincerely considered. Men being not infallible, and there being weighty and considerable Difficulties in many Points; ought they to assume the *Authority* to Judge and Magisterially to Determine for one another?

Tertullian in his *Apology* complains, that the Heathens condemned Christianity without knowing what it was, or what Reasons there were for it. Are not many Christians now a days guilty of the same unreasonableness, in rashly Condemning one anothers Opinions as the worst of Heresies?

After all, it cannot be pretended that it is possible by any Method absolutely to hinder Men from Erring; and the Scripture expressly declares that *There must be Heresies, that they which are approved may be made manifest*, 1 Cor. 11. 19. It therefore appears that we are not to look for any Infallible means of suppressing Errors, seeing God has foretold what the event will be. It is only to be inquired, which is the Safest, the Justest and most Religious Way to secure the Truth and expose Error. And then the only Method we can reasonably pitch upon for that end, must evidently be thus qualified. 1. It must be fit (not irresistibly to force all sorts of Men to acknowledge *all manner of Truths*, but) sufficiently to discover *every necessary Truth* to sincere Persons, and if they do their part, to enable and perswade them therein to Unite. 2. It must be agreeable to Scripture and Reason, to the Temper and Genius of the Gospel, and therefore must not be tainted with Partiality and Oppression, nor with any necessary evil Effects, but constantly its natural tendency must be to the securing of the Truth, and sufficiently Instructing of Men, actually making it always very possible, and easy, for every sincere Person to Discern and Profess, to Embrace and Practise

else whatsoever is absolutely necessary to Salvation. Now no other Method but *Scripturalism* has these Qualifications; as we have indisputably shewn. It is *Scripturalism* alone that is consistent to Justice and Reason, and the Genius of the Gospel; and that is not subject to any necessary evil Effects. It preserves the Truth from the Violence of Barbarous Men, shields it from the Corruption and Falsification of Deceivers, and proposeth sufficient means, for sincere Christians, rightly and certainly to Instruct themselves in all the cerns of their Souls. For *Scripturalism* (and it alone) secures the liberty of Freely and Impartially Studying the Word of God; and the Word of God, thus studyed, clearly represents and discovers to every Sincere Person, whatsoever is absolutely necessary for his Eternal Welfare.

With what grounds then can it be Objected that the *Method of Scripture* patronizeth Errors, and is not a sufficient Profession of Faith? And what greater Indignity can be offered to *Scripture*, than contemptuously to call it a *Lurking hole for Heresies* and a *Leaden Rule*, as if the Holy Ghost had *not made therein sufficient Determinations*, and had *not expressed things as they ought to have been express'd*; and as if it was not Mens inexcusable inconsideration, if they mistake in any Essentials of Religion?

But, on the other hand, it should be considered, some may be thought to mistake, who perhaps do not so. And, according to the Principles of *Protestants*, no one has right Magisterially to decide of that, more than those themselves who are esteemed to Err; as has been evidently shewn: So that by the *Protestant* Principles, it is necessary that every one be allowed to hold and profess his Opinions in the Terms of Scripture. And they are the only Principles agreeable to Reason, there being no Magisterial Judge of Controversies,

troverſies, nor other Rule of Faith acknowledged beſides the Scripture.

If ſome, under the expreſſions of Scripture, keep any Errors, there let 'em keep them: They (who are to Judge for themſelves, and are accountable to God, for their inward thoughts, and for the uſe they make of the means of Knowledge,) being alone therein concerned: If they have any Errors, and keep them within thoſe Bounds, they'll do others no hurt. But (if we are *Proteſtants*) we cannot pretend to captivate other Mens Thoughts, nor therefore reject a Profeſſion of Faith in the Terms of Scripture.

If the Scripture be *clear as to all things neceſſary*, (as we have often obſerved that *Proteſtants* aſſert;) then evidently a Profeſſion of Faith in the very words of Scripture muſt be *ſufficient*; the ſaid Profeſſion either being thoſe very words which are judged to be ſufficiently clear; or elſe not actually concerning abſolute Neceſſaries. Whoſoever miſunderſtands any conſiderable Particular in ſuch a *Scriptural* Confeſſion, it is his own fault; being guilty of miſattending to, and miſconſtruing clear Scripture: And ſo, he that upbraids thoſe Profeſſions of Faith, as being Inſufficient and Imperfect, upbraideth in like manner the Scripture it ſelf. As long therefore as the Scripture is clear as much as is neceſſary, and the *Method of Scripture* ſecures the true and only Study of the Word of God; there is no danger that any neceſſary Truth ſhall be loſt, if Men do not Univerſally neglect the Reading of Scripture, and actually break the Rules of *Scripturaliſm*.

There will then be no danger of there being as many Religions as there are different Heads, as the *Papiſts* prophanely aſſert muſt be the effect of freely Reading Scripture. Chriſtians may differ and miſtake in many things, and not be of different Religions, but ſtill be, equally, the Children of God. For if they

Read

Read the Scripture sincerely, they will all agree in that which is *the essence of the Gospel*, that is, in things Necessary.

The whole intendment of Scripture is to Ground in us the belief of another (and that an * *immortal*) World, to make us truly Religious, Vertuous and Good, to fit us for the next Life, and for God's Everlasting Love and Favour.

* 2 Tim. 1. 10.

No Errors whatsoever properly injure God. He cannot be the better nor worse, for any Thoughts or Sentiments of Men. He is never displeased with us, therefore, meerly for Erring; only he is not willing we should be Ignorant of the things, without the knowledge of which we cannot learn to be Holy, and to qualify our selves for the participation of a Divine Nature; or that we should be unsincere in the Study of his Will, and should wilfully neglect any means to Instruct our selves rightly of our Duty, because that argues a corrupt and disobedient Temper, void of Piety and Sincerity, absolutely unfit for the State, Purity and Perfection of Heaven. But when we sincerely do what we can to know the Truth, God (as I said) cannot but Love us, tho' we happen to mistake; *for we have, then,* notwithstanding our mistakes, *all that is vertuous or praise-worthy in them who actually profess and discern all Truths.*

And, when we have *bona fide*, and in the Fear of God *proved all things*, to the best of our power, in Holy Scriptures, the Errors that possibly we may still retain, will be of so little Consequence, that they will be no just cause of Division, (being kept within the Bounds that *Scripturalism* prescribes,) but will be looked upon as meere Human Infirmities, which do not alter the integrity of Faith, there still remaining a sincere Disposition of absolute Submission to God in all things known to be his Will; for notwithstanding such

ſuch Errors, every ſincere Chriſtian will carefully obſerve the Commands of the Goſpel, according to the degree of his Knowledge, and the meaſure of his Faith, which all have not in the ſame meaſure and degree. There is not then an equal Neceſſity or an equal Obligation of believing all Truths; for *all Truths are not equally known to all the Faithful, tho' ſuch be all equally Faithful*, or equally ſincerely diſpoſed to embrace whatſoever they can find to be Taught by God, and to be moſt probably the Senſe of his Word.

Thus tho' all Divine Truths be good, yet all are not abſolutely neceſſary to be known to all. For ſome otherwiſe neceſſary Truths are not abſolutely ſuch in reſpect to all Perſons, all being agreeable to God in the degree of Knowledge they can arrive unto, if their Lives be anſwerable to that Knowledge; becauſe all, if they be ſincere, and ſincerely ſtudy their Duty, may certainly know enough. For how limited ſoever be the Knowledge that is got by Reading the *Scripture*, it is ſtill ſufficient to Salvation, if we be not ignorant of the reſt that we do not know, by wilful obſtinacy or careleſneſs, fleſhly Intereſt, or any evil and voluntary Cauſe, but by mere want of Means, or Ability, of being better informed.

It is thro' the belief of thoſe things which are *abſolutely neceſſary*, that all Chriſtians (of all Ranks ſoever) ſo direct their Lives as to be Saved, even the Learned, that are ſaved; for after the great buſtle they make in the World with their Learned Diſquiſitions and Inquiries, if they at laſt actually work the Salvation of their Souls, it is by a lively *belief of the plaineſt Principles and Matters* of Fact of Chriſtianity, which the Conſciences of the meaneſt Perſons are awakened by, and which, in a word, move and diſpoſe them ſincerely to obſerve the Commands of God, to the beſt of their knowledge and power. That is the only

only Terms of Salvation for all Christians whatsoever, as is evident, in that Christians are under Terms of Grace, (and that, consequently, no more is absolutely required of them, than they are enabled to perform,) and in that what the meanest Capacities may learn out of the Scripture, if they Sincerely attend to it, suffices to perfuade them to believe in God, and to lead a Vertuous and Holy Life; for as we have seen, the Word of God is *able to save our Souls*, and the Holy Scripture is given by Divine Inspiration, and is *proper* (or fit) *to make the Man of God perfect, and throughly furnished unto all good Works*. It appears therefore manifestly that the *Method of Scripture* secures all necessary and saving Knowledge.

Then, as *Calixtus* observes, " if, notwithstanding " the Errors we object to each other, we account " One the other Christians, and behave our selves to " them as such, judging they only Err thro' weak- " ness, and so (laying aside those Hatreds and Ani- " mosities which do disturb our Minds, and vehe- " mently hinder the knowledge of the Truth) would " peaceably confer and inquire into the Truth, there " is no small Ground to hope, the Divine Grace, " which loves to help the Meek, assisting, that the " Truth shall be at last found out, and our Dissenti- " ons shall be either quite composed, or much aba- " ted; but if we do persist in mutual Hatred, Dete- " stations, and Execrations, the Eyes of our Under- " standing will be so darkened as neither to be able " to discern Truth, nor Concord." *Calixt.* of Mutual Forbearance, &c. *Prop.* 84.

It is certain, on the one hand, that no Errors, as we have seen, can be injurious to God, or hurtful to Us, when we mistake not wilfully; and on the other, that Violence and Partiality cannot be thought by any Sober, considering Person, a reasonable means to discover

cover and ſecure the Truth. The Goſpel expreſly commands us to bear with one another, tho' of various Opinions, and has promiſed a good event thereof, *Phil.* 3. 15. St. *Paul* alſo judged that not only to Tolerate, but to examine and prove all things, was no danger to our holding faſt that which is right, but the way to it, and therefore our Duty, 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 21. But how ſhall we prove all things, (which includes at leaſt all Opinions founded on Scripture,) unleſs we not only Tolerate them, but patiently and carefully Conſider them? Thoſe then that find fault here with *Scripturaliſm* on pretence that it allows a fair diſcuſſion of things, think only of partially favouring their Notions, to the hazard of the Truth, if they be miſtaken, as they may, being Fallible. But it is infallibly more Pious and Rational to follow ſuch a Method as certainly favours and ſecures, always, the Truth, wherever it be; that is, by letting it ſtand on its own bottom, and allowing of a free and impartial ſearch of it.

Truth has indubitably Evidences, by which careful and ſincere Perſons may certainly (as we have obſerved) diſtinguiſh it from Error; otherwiſe none could ever be obliged to do it. Let it therefore be all our Care, that in the ſearch of Truth, Men be not biaſſed by Partiality or Prejudice, but that they act therein with Sincerity, and a thorow Attention; and then, thro' God's Grace, they may obtain the end of their juſt Inquiries: For no Truth will be in danger to be loſt, if Men be allowed Impartially to conſider the Reaſons on both ſides, in weighty and difficult Matters. But, in Sum, for a poſitive Profeſſion of a Chriſtian's Faith, it is, evidently, moſt conducive to Peace and Unity, and the intereſt of the Truth, that it be done in the Expreſſions of Scripture, rather than in any other Words: And, we have ſhewn, *that it is as much a ſufficient Confeſſion, as the Scripture is a ſufficient declaration*

claration of all necessary Truths. They therefore, that will not content themselves with the *Method of Scripture*, besides that they are Unjust and Partial, and express the highest disesteem and contempt for the Scriptures; take the way to perpetuate Confusion and Schism, and render the Peace and Union of Christians for ever Impossible.

CHAP. XVII.

The Answer to the Fifth Objection.

THE Fifth Objection is, That it would savour of indifference in Religion, to Communicate with Men of different or unknown Opinions, as would be unavoidable, admitting of the *Method of Scripture*. The mistake of this Objection will be evinced by the following Considerations.

1st, It must be considered, that all those that Communicate together, admitting of *Scripturalism*, know that they Communicate with Persons who receive the Word of God for the Rule of their Faith, and who will consequently, in all probability, discern all Truths there, as far as God will judge it necessary for them. For, as we have already observed, if the Rules of the *Method of Scripture*, be exactly follow'd, that is, if the Holy Scriptures be Freely, Impartially, and Carefully inquired into and Studyed, Men may certainly know and discover all things necessary to Salvation.

2dly. It must likewise be considered, that it would be impertinent, and particularly *contrary to the Protestant Principles* to desire to know more, of those with whom we would Communicate, than, in general, that they

they hold the Principles of *Scripturalism*, that is, that they receive the Holy Scriptures for their Rule. For, the *Word of God being a sufficient Rule*, (as we see *Protestants* assert it is;) *the sticking close to it, must needs be sufficient Terms of union.* Otherwise, if in order to external Union we be not satisfied with a Scriptural Profession, (comprised in their declaring Scripture to be their Rule;) we either mean that the Scripture is not clear in it self, and is not a perfect Rule; or we defraud others of the liberty to judge for themselves, and we actually set up a Tribunal of Inquisition.

3*dly*. It appears that it is not absolutely necessary to an outward Communion or visible Fellowship of Christians, that all be of the same Opinions, or be all free from Error: First, Because that was provided for at no time and by no Party of Christians, nor indeed can be: Secondly, Because the mischief either of Schisms, or of Constraint, is worse than that of different Opinions in the same Communion.

First, It is not absolutely necessary to an outward Communion, that all be of the same Opinions, or be free from Error, because that was provided for at no time, and by no Party of Christians. Not to take notice of the differing *Protestants*, who are far from being all of the same Opinions; if ever that might be effectually provided for by any, one would think it were by the *Romish* Church, which stileth her self the Judge of Controversies, and expressly assumes the Right of making Magisterial Determinations. Nevertheless, every one knows how much those of the Church of *Rome* differ (as we have observed) among themselves in innumerable Instances, and about the most weighty Points of their Religion; wherein, if all do not err, yet some necessarily must be mistaken: notwithstanding which they preserve an inviolable Union in the same Body.

But the Church of *Rome* is no warrant for us, nor no Church, in no Age, beside the truly Primitive and Apostolical. Otherwise I might insist on the several Errors of most of the Fathers, on *Synesius* his being a Bishop, and the like, which manifestly confirm what I have advanced.

But I chuse chiefly to enlarge on that which remains, that is, the Doctrine and Practice of the Apostles themselves in this matter, who on all hands are owned for infallible Guides. And if we examine what in the sacred Writings, we may find they taught and did in relation to this subject, we shall see that they held it not absolutely necessary to the Communion of Christians, that they should be all of the same Opinions, or should be free from Error.

Prejudiced Persons will be apt to cry, That the Apostles frequently charge Christians to be *like-minded*, to be *all of the same Mind*, to be *perfectly joyned together in the same Judgment*, to *speak all the same Thing*, and *to glorify God with one Mind and one Mouth*: Concluding from thence, that it is an absolutely necessary Qualification for Union, that all be of the same Opinions; all that will unite and will be admitted into one Body in the Church, being indubitably bound to observe the Apostles Command. But then this Apostolical Command must be carefully considered; which if it be, it will be found to import (not an absolute Injunction that Christians be all of the same Opinions, but) an earnest Exhortation that they all bear with, and love one another, and do not divide into Parties for any Differences, but keep to the general Terms of Union, being thus joyned by the Bond of Charity in the same common Principles. For in general, the Texts that charge us to be *of the same Mind* or to be *like-minded*, and the like, do not absolutely require the Union of Christians in the same Opinions, but

the Union of Christian Love and Charity, as we shall find if we examine all the Texts where such Expressions are used.

Rom. 12. 16. we are bid *to be of the same Mind*; the Apostle adds, *one towards another*; *Be of the same Mind one towards another*: Which shews that he speaks not of being of the same Opinions, but of being like minded in charitable Dispositions and in mutual Love towards one another. Which is confirmed by the Exhortations that go before and that follow, as of *rejoycing with them that rejoyce, and weeping with them that weep; condescending with them of low estate; recompencing to no man evil for evil, living peaceably with all men*, and the like, all of the same Nature.

That of *Rom.* 15. 5, 6. is of the same import: *God grant you to be like-minded, that ye may with one Mind and one Mouth glorify God.* That is, God grant that all your Envyings and Animosities may cease, that being united in Love and Affection, you may, with fervent Zeal, worship God together, no Divisions nor Quarrels then hindering.

1 *Cor.* 1. 10. The Apostle exhorts the Brethren to speak all the same Thing, and to be perfectly joyned together in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment. But his Meaning appears when he shews wherein the *Corinthians* spake not the same Thing, and wherein they were not *perfectly joyned together in the same Mind and in the same Judgment*, which was in that actually falling out with one another thro' uncharitable Heat and Passion, they studied to make their Differences greater and greater, affected contentiously to dispute against one another's Sentiments, and, to make the Breach wider and less remediable, divided and took up different Denominations. As it is in the 11th and 12th Verses of this, and in the 3d and 4th of the third Chapter: I hear that there are *Envyings* and *Strife*,

Contentions and *Divisions* among you, so that every one of you saith, *I am of* Paul, *and I of* Apollo, *and I of* Cephas, *and I of* Christ. Wherefore it is, he pathetically addresses himself to them at the 10th Verse of the first Chapter in these words, *I beseech you, Brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no Divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same Mind and in the same Judgment.* That ye all *speak the same thing*, that is, that ye do not say, *I am of* Paul, *and I of* Apollo, *and I of* Cephas, *and I of* Christ; but that ye all unanimously take up the same and only Denomination of Christian Brethren, and do not divide into Parties: *But that ye be perfectly joyned together in the same Mind and in the same Judgment*, that is, as if he had said, instead of fomenting Divisions among you, firmly unite in Christian Charity and mutual Affection, I beseech you; and whereas ye have applied your selves to make your Differences greater, endeavour to lessen them, do what reasonably you can to appear and be of the like Sentiments, and at least be perfectly joyned together in the same Judgment in the general Terms of Union. All which is exactly agreeable to the *Method of Scripture*; more than which the Apostle did not desire, as we shall further observe.

Phil. 2. 2. *Being like-minded*, is explained by *having the same Love*, and, in the following Verse, by *doing nothing thro' strife.*

In the following Chapter, at the 15th and 16th Verses, the Apostle doth not assert that those that will be owned as Brethren in the same Body and Fellowship of Christians, must be all of the same Opinions; but he saith, That they that *press toward the Mark*, and are equally mindful of this one thing necessary, that is, that sincerely and carefully labour to attain to Salvation, the *Price* or Reward *of the high calling of*

God

God in the Goſpel; tho' they ſhould be *otherwiſe minded* or in their Sentiments ſhould differ *in any thing*, yet God will give them Grace certainly to diſcover all that will be neceſſary for them, if they keep together in Unity, and jointly make uſe of the Means of Grace; as it is in the 16th Verſe, if they *walk by the ſame Rule*, and unite wherein they agree, and in that *whereto they have already attained*, not hindering the Diſcoveries that may be made.

Phil. 4. 2. *Paul* beſeeches *Euiodas* and *Syntiche*, that they be of the ſame mind, *in the Lord*, or thro' the Lord. For the words bear this ſenſe, *I entreat* Euodias *and* Syntiche *by the Lord that they be friends*, (whatever their Differences were,) or that they *agree* to do joyntly the Work of Chriſtian Matrons; namely, for inſtance, to viſit the Sick, relieve the Neceſſitous, *&c.*

In fine, 1 *Pet.* 3. St. *Peter* having exhorted, in the beginning of the Chapter, Husbands and Wives to their ſeveral Duties towards one another, paſſeth, at the 8th Verſe, to this general Exhortation, *Be ye all of one Mind*; which he explains by the following *ſynonimous* Expreſſions, *have compaſſion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.*

Thus having ſeen that the Apoſtles do not teach that it is abſolutely neceſſary to the Communion of Chriſtians, that they be all of the ſame Opinions; we may now obſerve that they have expreſly taught the contrary, and that therefore they laid down no other Terms of Union than the very Terms implied in the *Method of Scripture*. For, Firſt, they take notice themſelves of different Sentiments among Chriſtians in their time; as *Rom.* 14. 2, 5. and about ſuch Queſtions as theſe, Whether it be lawful to Chriſtians to eat any thing beſide Herbs? and, Whether they were not obliged to make thoſe differences of days

which the Ceremonial Law ordained? The superstitious adhering to which the Apostle St. *Paul* positively declares to tend to the total subversion of the Design and Efficacy of Christianity, *Gal.* 5. 4. And yet, Secondly, (so the Errors in this case, and the like, were not held wilfully, viciously and tumultuously, with a Spirit of Schism and Contention,) the Apostle instead of opining that they who held them should be separated from the Communion of Christians, absolutely commands that they be tolerated and received as Brethren, *Rom.* ch. 14. ver. 3, 4, 6, 10, 13, 19, and 22. Yet Christians had then an advantage which we have not, in that they had living Guides infallibly inspired with the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, tho' at the same time St. *Paul* himself gives his Opinion in the matter, he still willeth that those who have different Sentiments be treated like Fellow-members of the same Body, far from damning, anathematizing or excommunicating them. How can we then excommunicate, anathematize, damn those who in Opinions differ from us; we, who have not the Gift of Infallibility, when the Apostles who were infallible, did it not?

Indeed, when the Apostle notifies his Judgment concerning a matter, tho' he still bears with those that have different Sentiments, yet he alloweth them not to make a bustle, and hold litigious Disputes about them; as we see, *Rom.* 14. 1. *Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful Disputations.* And in this there is nothing contrary to the *Method of Scripture*, as we have represented it; tho' certainly we are necessarily to make greater allowances in this matter than Christians were obliged to do in the days of the Apostles, because the living Guides now instead of being infallible, as they were then, may as well be mistaken as those whom they account to be *the weak*

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in the faith, and may themſelves be thoſe that err; whereas they that were guided by the Apoſtles, might be infallibly aſſured that they were in the right.

Howbeit, tho' they that were then infallibly in the wrong, were not permitted to dogmatize or diſpute, as we have obſerved, yet undoubtedly they were equally ſuffered freely to repreſent the Reaſons *Pro* and *Con*, as well in thoſe matters about which they had particular Sentiments, as in all others; ſeeing the Apoſtle in general directs to *prove all things*. So that evidently there was nothing in the Method of the Apoſtles different from the Terms of *Scripturaliſm*; but, contrariwiſe, it manifeſtly appears that it was never provided that *all ſhould be of the ſame Opinions*, in order to be admitted into the ſame Body and Fellowſhip of Chriſtians.

And indeed no effectual Proviſion can be made that all be of the ſame Opinions. For not all the Exhortations, nor all the Conſtraint and the Magiſterial Determinations in the World will *perſuade, without perſuaſive Reaſons*: And in ſome things, the ſame Reaſons do not equally perſuade all Men; but Men, differing in infinite reſpects, will always judge variouſly about many things capable of different probable ſenſes. The only expedient therefore for Union, is mutually to bear with one another, and inviolably to ſtick to the *Method of Scripture*. For,

Secondly, It appears that it is not abſolutely neceſſary to an outward Communion, or viſible Fellowſhip of Chriſtians, that all be of the ſame Opinions, or that all be free from Errors *becauſe the miſchief either of Schiſms or of Conſtraint, is worſe than that of different Opinions in the ſame Communion*. Indeed, what hurt is it to others if ſome are of different Opinions, the general Terms of Union being agreed unto? If thoſe different Sentiments are miſchievous, they

are miſchievous only to them that hold them. But, as *Tertullian* * obſerves, *Religion is not to be forced, but ought to be profeſſed with full freedom, and without the leaſt conſtraint. And no Man's Religion either advances or hinders the Salvation of others*; but every Man muſt look to himſelf, *for every one to his own Maſter ſtandeth or falleth*, Rom. 14. 4.

* *Ad Scapul.*

The *Phariſees*, the *Sadducees* and *Eſſenes* were of very different Opinions, and that about ſome moſt important Points; nevertheleſs, they all met conſtantly together in their common Worſhip of God in the Temple, and that was never ſcrupled at. And we have ſeen that the Apoſtles likewiſe tolerated Errors in the Churches, and made no Schiſms upon occaſion of them; but both by their Exhortations and Examples recommended to Chriſtians, to be made all things to all Men, and ſeek by all means the Edification of the Church: Differences of Opinion therefore, certainly, it thereby appears, are not ſo miſchievous as that they need tend to the breaking of Communion.

I know but of two Objections that can be made: The firſt, That Men of different Sentiments, if they be not excommunicated may corrupt others of the ſame Body. But I have ſhewn that there can be no danger of that, in any important Point, if the *Method of Scripture* be exactly followed. I add theſe three Conſiderations: Firſt, They may have as much opportunity of drawing others to their Opinions, if they are forced to a Schiſm, as before, and more; becauſe their caſe will be more pitied, and their Apologies, by reaſon of the Rupture, will more generally be taken notice of. Secondly, On pretence of purging out, and violently ſtopping the ſpreading of Error, Truth may be in danger of being oppreſſed and

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exterminated, Men being not infallible; and ſo they certainly run the hazard of doing the greateſt miſchief in the World, and of being found to fight againſt God. Thirdly, After all, it is a great diſparagement to Truth to be afraid to hear what can be ſaid againſt it; as if Truth were ſo weak and uncertain, that it were not to be diſtinguiſhed from Error *by a greater evidence*; or as if Inconſideration and implicit Faith, or a partial Examination of things was a more reaſonable and ſure Method to diſcern their evidence and certainty, than a thorow and impartial inquiry; and as if the Arguments that could be brought againſt the evidence of Reaſon were too hard for it, and not to be encountered by thoſe Forces which Truth it ſelf undeniably hath on its ſide.

Thoſe that are afraid of the Light, give juſt ground of ſuſpicion that their Works are Evil: And thoſe that are averſe to hear their Opinions and the Opinions of others diſcuſſed and impartially examined, viſibly betray a diſtruſt of the goodneſs of their Cauſe.

Howbeit, Woe is unto them that warrant ſuch Meaſures which may as well cruſh the Truth as Error; who take upon them a Right they have no title to, of impoſing on others and making Magiſterial Determinations; who being fallible, yet (like *Antichriſt*) act as if they were infallible; and who, if themſelves and their Party be miſtaken, make it next to impoſſible that ever they ſhould be better informed.

The other Objection which ſome are here apt to make, is, That Errors are works of the Fleſh, and the Apoſtle bids Chriſtians to avoid thoſe that are Hereticks. But this Objection is founded on a groſs miſtake, as if there was no difference betwixt Errors and Hereſies. *Hereſie* originally ſignifies a *Sect*, and ſo may be taken indifferently in a good or bad ſenſe,

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as the Sect is good or bad. But, as it has been the fate of some Words, that of *Heresie*, which was indifferent before, is come to be commonly taken in the worst signification, and be applied to a *corrupt Sect*, whose abetters are vicious and wilful Sectaries. That is the Notion the Holy Scripture gives of it, when *Heresie* is there mentioned with blame.

In *Galat.* 5. 21. not Errors, but *Heresies* (or criminal Sects) are termed *works of the Flesh*. And, *Tit.* 3. 11. St. *Paul* declares that the *Heretick* (or criminal Sectaries) that he will have to be *avoided*, are such as are manifestly *known* to be *subverted*, so as to *sin wilfully*, being *condemned* even of their own *Consciences*; so that they are Men that make Divisions, and a great bustle, for trivial matters which they know, or may easily know to be such, and that plainly shew therefore that they are sensual and irreligious Persons, that are chiefly acted by the interests of the Flesh, by Pride and Animosity, and the like Passions, seeing it cannot be but their own Conscience tells them, that those things they contend about are not so absolutely important as to require, that for them they should cause such a Disorder in the Church. They are therefore very criminal and abominable. But then it is ridiculous to give the name of *Heretick* (in a bad sense) to any that are not Sectaries, or to any Sectaries whose Sect is not visibly wilful, and accompanied with Vice and Passion; so that it is impertinent to confound or compare *Heresie* with *Error*, there being always Malice and Wickedness mingled with *Heresie*, taken in a bad sense; and such Heresie implying a wilful and needless Division about any matter whatsoever, but Error being often without either of these, and being consistent with Goodness, Piety and Sincerity.

But,

But, you will ſay, Do we then make all Opinions to be indifferent? No; God forbid! Some are certainly Antichriſtian, and directly deſtructive of Virtue, true Holineſs and Morality. And even as for the Opinions that are not of this nature, but are compatible with the ultimate End and Deſign of the *eternal Goſpel*; yet they are not to be indifferent to us, but we are bound carefully to examine them: And we muſt neceſſarily ſide with thoſe which, after all the ſearch we are capable of, we find to be the moſt credible. And if we happen then in any wiſe to err, it being none of our fault, not erring wilfully; it is not to be doubted but that God will nevertheleſs be gracious to us. For we may err, without being guilty of any of the Sins of wicked *Seſtwies*: Agreeably to the Saying of the Father, *Errare poſſum, hæreticus eſſe nolo.*

St. *Hilary* obſerveth, That *God doth not call us to Happineſs by difficult Queſtions.* We may then miſtake in a thouſand difficult Points, and be in no danger, if it be none of our fault. The Apoſtle tells us, that on the ſame good Foundation, Hay and Stubble may be built, as well as Silver and Gold, and precious Stones, 1 *Cor.* 3. 12.

But ſome perhaps will angrily demand, What! are *Lutherans*, *Anabaptiſts*, *Arminians*, &c. no Hereticks? I anſwer, All theſe may have ſome Errors, but are no *Hereticks*; *Hereſie* being a viſible effect of inordinate Paſſion, and conſequently a fault of the Will, profeſſly againſt Reaſon and Scripture, in oppoſition thereto ſetting up other Rules out of Raſhneſs, and Pride, and other corrupt Paſſions of the Fleſh: But Error being againſt the Will, in miſunderſtanding Scripture, thro' mere miſtake, after all ſincere endeavour to underſtand it rightly. It is a human frailty and weakneſs of Man's Underſtanding

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to err; and no Man is infallible here on Earth. But ſo long as all ſuch as are of different Sentiments, profeſs to ſet the Word of God only before them as the Rule of Faith and Obedience, and expreſs themſelves in the very words of Scripture; there need no Schiſm or Diviſion follow from their Differences: And, always acting with moderation and Sobriety, and uſing all diligence and ſincerity of Heart, by Reading, by Learning, by Study, and by Prayer for Illumination of the Holy Spirit to underſtand the Rule and obey it; they do what Man can do: God will aſſuredly be merciful to them, and pardon them, as he did the Friends of *Job*, good and pious Men, tho' miſtaken (as there it appears) in ſome Points of Doctrine.

But it will be ſaid, with Chriſtians it is otherwiſe, whom God has promiſed by his Spirit to teach all things. True, all things abſolutely *neceſſary to Salvation*: But the hotteſt Diſputes among *Proteſtants*, calmly and charitably inquired into, will be found leſs than ſuch.

The *Lutherans* hold *Conſubſtantiation*; an Error indeed, but not mortal, not deſtructive of Holineſs and Vertue.

The *Anabaptiſt* is accuſed of denying Infants their Right to Baptiſm; but they think, they deny nothing but what the Scripture denies them: And that Error concerns but the *Anabaptiſts* themſelves and not us, when we have done our part in declaring impartially the Reaſons we think there is for Infant-Baptiſm.

The *Arminian* is condemned by other *Proteſtants* for ſetting up Free-will againſt Free-grace; but that imputation he diſclaims in all his Writings, and grounds himſelf largely upon Scripture only.

Could

Could not all these leave their different Denominations, and agree to be together in one Body *Protestants*, or *Scriptural Christians*? Could they not accordingly enjoy, in God's Name, peaceably, every one their particular Sentiments; publick Discourses insisting chiefly on that which is uncontroverted, and what most directly tends to Vertue, Holiness and Piety; expressing the rest in Scripture-terms, and, when it is to be discussed, so impartially representing the Reasons of both sides, that it be *not distinguishable that any side is favoured*, leaving every one's Judgment free, after a genuine Representation of the credibility of the thing, and the evidence of Truth? *

* *Ad Pacem Ecclesiæ tuendam, necessarium omnino est ut Ministri, prout etiam omnes Christianos decet, summam in Controversiis tractandis Christianæ modestiæ rationem habeant, ab odiosis contra sentientium denominationibus & traductionibus, item a calumniis in sententia ipsorum referenda abstineant, nec consequentias suas pro partis adversæ Opinionibus afferant aut venditent; argumenta pro sententia sua valide quidem, attamen modeste, semper proponant, partisque adversæ Objectiones sine nomine, saltem odioso, refutent: Breviter, ea in contra sentientes moderatione, charitate & prudentia utantur, qua ipsos erga se uti optarent, vitando omnia quæ ad animos illorum vel auditorum in ipsos exarcebandum facere posse existimarent, nihil aliis imperiose præscribendo, sed unicuique judicii sui Libertatem salvam relinquendo, semperque (non obstante opinionum diversitate) ad pacem & tolerantiam mutuam omneque Schisma fugiendum monendo & concludendo.*

It cannot be denied that they that have held different Opinions among *Protestants*, were yet learned, worthy, zealous, and religious Men, as appears by their Lives written, and the fame of their many eminent and learned Followers, perfect and powerful in the Scriptures, holy and unblamable in their Lives:

And

And it cannot be imagined, that God would desert such painful and zealous Labourers in his Church, and oftentimes great sufferers for their Conscience, to damnable Errors and a reprobate Sense, who have so often implored the assistance of his Spirit; but rather, having made no Man infallible, that he has pardon'd their Errors, and accepts their pious Endeavours, sincerely searching all things according to the Rule of Scripture. Then if, notwithstanding their Errors, they that take the Scripture for their Rule had kept a good Intelligence with one another, they would have done little hurt either to themselves or others.

But as for *Schism*, it is it self the greatest of all Mischiefs. It doth infinitely prejudice the Christian Faith, gratifies the Infidel and *Sceptick*, scandalizeth the weak, and has a pernicious influence upon the generality of Christians, by promoting Strife, Enmity, Carnality, and all the Evils consequent upon them, by obstructing the Love and Peace, Order and Edification of the Church, and the Benefit of our Prayers, and by endangering our eternal Happiness. So that they who give occasion and constrain others to a Separation, indubitably may expect the utmost of God's Severity and Vengeance. For certainly the guilt of Schism lieth at the Door of them who needlessly excommunicate others, or give 'em just cause to forsake their Communion. How can then any say, That upon any Difference in Speculation, or but Doubts perhaps, and Conjectures, and also for *things indifferent*, those that hold the Scripture for their Rule, must divide, and *make*, or *cause* a Separation?

It is expressly asserted by many Fathers, that Schism is the greatest of all Sins, and is not expiable even by Martyrdom. *

* See some Quotations in Dr. *Hammond*'s Treatise of Schism, ch. 1. §. 6.

Constraint

Conſtraint therefore, likewiſe, and the attempting upon the Liberties and Priviledges of Chriſtians, muſt needs be alſo one of the moſt heinous Enormities; naturally cauſing Schiſms. For if thoſe that have different Sentiments be moleſted, and worried by a black Tribunal of Inquiſition; it is natural for them to ſeek to put themſelves out of the reach of it. And beſides, Conſtraint in it ſelf is moſt Antichriſtian, and moſt directly contrary to the Spirit of the Goſpel.

Then, in ſum, whatſoever is contrary to the *Method of Scripture*, is infinitely more miſchievous than Differences of Opinion tolerated in the ſame Communion. For the raſh condemning of the Opinions of others; the ſcurrilous ſcoffing at the Sentiments of other Men, or defaming and ill treating their Perſons for thinking otherwiſe than we do; fixing opprobrious Names on them; raiſing Prejudices againſt them any ways indirectly; not ſuffering them to repreſent freely their Reaſons; in fine, making it impoſſible for our Selves and Poſterity to rectifie our Notions, if we happen in any reſpect to err: All theſe, and the like, are to undervalue and ſlight the Means of Grace and of Knowledge, to trample under Foot the moſt clear and moſt ſacred Duties of Religion, and hazard to be found the Oppreſſors and Perſecutors of Truth; than which no greater miſchief can be imagined.

CHAP.

CHAP. XVIII.

The Answer to the Sixth Objection.

THE next Objection is, That many excellent parts of Devotion will be omitted, if Christians absolutely stick to Scriptural Expressions in their Terms of Union. For accordingly no Expression can be used in Publick Devotions, but what's used in Scripture, or is owned by all Parties to be agreeable to the generality of Scripture. And then we cannot, for instance, give Thanks for our Predestination, in that God hath, without any Considerations, elected us, and a few more, to eternal Felicity, and hath absolutely reprobated the rest of Mankind; nor ask for an immediate and irresistible Grace; the advancement of the millenary Kingdom here upon Earth, and the like not perfectly Scriptural. But I answer,

First, The Conceptions of Men are boundless and infinite, and might therefore, no doubt, confound and disfigure Publick Devotion, if therein not restrained within the Limits prescribed by the *Method of Scripture*.

Secondly, It is not agreeable to Reason, to Religion, nor the Protestant Principles, to set up such Terms of Union for Christians, which not suiting to the generality of Scripture, but being Magisterial Determinations, would oblige any to Acts of Devotion contrary to their Conscience. As

* *Lib.* 5. *Cap.* 19. *Lactantius* observes, * *Nothing ought to be so free as Religion: For if the Heart of him that sacrificeth is averse to what*

what he doth, there is no more Religion; it is taken away, it is perfectly hindered. And, as *Tertullian* * has it, ſpeaking to the Heathens, *If you make us to join in your Sacrifices, you will do nothing agreeable to your Gods: For, can forced Offerings be acceptable?*

* *Ad Scapul.*

Thirdly, The Word of God being a perfect and compleat Rule, certainly that holy Word may furniſh us with the abſolutely neceſſary parts of Devotion; as might eaſily be ſhewn, if the devout Expreſſions in Scripture were collected and put into a Method. And it is pity that thoſe who have the opportunities and abilities to do it, have not Zeal enough to undertake or promote ſo good a Work, to give a viſible Demonſtration of this Truth. But not ſuperſtitiouſly to ſtick to the words of the Bible, as my meaning is not that it is abſolutely neceſſary to do, we may uſe ſuch as exactly agree with the Latitude or generality thereof. And it is certain that Prayers and Diſcourſes contained in thoſe Terms, will anſwer the ends of Religion, and will be edifying to all Men. Yet,

Laſtly, If any thought Scriptural Devotions were deficient in any reſpect, what they thought ſo, they might eaſily make up, for themſelves, in their private Exerciſes. There they may enter into as many Particulars, as they ſhall judge good. Then if upon the account of any particular Sentiments of their own that may be expreſſed in Prayers, they break with others that will keep to the generality of Scripture in Publick Worſhip; viſibly they are guilty of Schiſm, and unavoidably accountable for all the miſchievous Conſequents thereof: Woe therefore unto them that thus cauſeleſſly obſtruct the Peace, and hinder the Re-union of Chriſtians.

CHAP. XIX.

The Answer to the Seventh Objection.

IT is further objected, That according to the Principles of *Scripturalists* all Ecclesiastical Constitution and Discipline would be uncertain, subject to innumerable Differences and Controversies, and alterable at every new Fancy and Imagination of every Particular. In answer to this Objection, I say,

First, If the Essence and Design of Religion, and the Duties of Compliance and *just Submission to Governors*, or even the Rules of *Charity* be calmly and fairly represented; all sincere *Protestants* will evidently see *that* their Dissensions were groundless, *that* whatsoever is capable of a tolerable Construction must (when established) be born with and conformed unto for Peace and Union sake, and *that* when the main of Religion is secured and nothing destructive of the great Intendment of it set up, particular Men cannot in conscience divide for *Points of Discipline* or *Things of their own Nature indifferent*. But,

Secondly, If then, it was possible still for *Protestants* not to agree unanimously to the same Constitutions; the only Expedient agreeable to Scripture and Reason, and to the Principles of Protestants, is even in these Differences to bear with one another, rather than give occasion to any Schism by Magisterial Determinations and Impositions. At the worst, Protestants do not so far differ in Points of Discipline, but that, if they follow'd the *Method of Scripture*, there might be an Accommodation and Union, without forcing any Parties to Things actually contrary to their Conscience. Why could not all Ministers, as they

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are called to particular Congregations, to receive their Ordination from a Bishop? Those that think not Infant Baptism proper, nor taught in Scripture, yet need not therefore break with the Church, the Liturgy allowing the Baptism of Adult Persons; and it is not even impossible for some to be admitted into the Ministry, who received not Baptism before they were of Age. If any are so strangely mistaken and deeply prejudiced as not to be capable of being perswaded of the lawfulness of set-Forms, they might be allowed as *a distinct* tho' *not separate Class* of Protestants to use their own ways in particular Chappels or Assemblies, as several distinct *Orders* among the *Romanists* are allowed to have particular Constitutions of their own, without breaking the Unity and mutual Correspondence between them. In a word, if Protestants will follow the Rules of *Scripturalism*, (as there are so many Reasons for them to do,) they must, for Peace-sake, keep most exactly to the undetermined Latitude of Scripture. And then there may be some Union and a good Intelligence among them, notwithstanding their greatest Differences; and as they acknowledge the same Rule, they may live under the Direction of the same spiritual Rulers and Governors.

Thirdly, According to the just Direction of the Author of *The Unreasonableness of Separation*, * none in reason ought to be so indulged as to be allowed, in any Right or Point of Discipline, to differ from that which is establish'd, (especially if they are to be owned still as Brethren tho' weak, and sincere tho' in some Things mistaken,) who do not sacredly profess and solemnly declare, *That they are perswaded it would be sinful for them to conform to the National Constitutions.* For if those that might conform to them without sinning, were permitted to frame

* *Pref.* p. 85, 86.

Differences, out of *wantonness*, and *a humour of being particular*, that indeed would make Discipline uncertain, and could not but occasion Confusion.

Lastly, It is to be observed, that if Protestants follow not these Rules and do not in some measure unite, it is not the fault of the *Terms of the Gospel* or of the *Method of Scripture*, but their own: And I have already noted that God has made no absolute Provision against *the possibility* of Heresies or Schisms, tho' the *Method of Scripture* be in all respects abundantly *sufficient* to all the ends of Religion; but they that will be wicked, let them be wicked still. *Rev.* 22. 11.

CHAP. XX.

The Answer to the Eighth Objection.

THE eighth Objection is, That the Method of *Scripturalism* is both new, and impossible to be put into practice. As for this pretended impossibility, it is founded on that the Versions of the Bible into vulgar Languages never were exactly agreeable in all Particulars to the Latitude of the Terms of Scripture in the Original, and that the generality of Christians are not capable to judge of Versions. To this I answer,

First, If the Principles of *Scripturalism* might be otherwise punctually followed, as we have shewn they may; it would be no harder matter to have a very exact Version. Supposing it not possible without many Hands and some Cost, that surely can be no hindrance. If an ordinary *Centurion* and imper-

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ſect Proſelyte generouſly took upon him the charge of *building* a *Synagogue* under the Jewiſh Diſpenſation, (as we ſee, *Luke* 7. 5.) when Life and Immortality were ſo darkly ſhadowed; what can we not expect that able and rich Men will do for the glory of God, the good of the Church, and their everlaſting Benediction, under the Chriſtian Oeconomy which preſents us with ſo exceeding great and precious Promiſes? All the Trouble and Expence they can be at for the moſt exact Verſion, *&c.* will be both Pleaſure and Gain to them, being an Offering acceptable to Almighty God, and thereby laying up for themſelves Treaſures in the Heavens, that fail not, *Mat.* 6. 20.

Secondly, An indifferent Verſion, when no better can be had, may ſuffice for the things abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation. Even a *Roman Catholick* Prelate could ſay, That *all Verſions exhibit the ſame Laws, the ſame Predictions, the ſame Hiſtory, the ſame Body of Doctrine, and in fine, the ſame Subſtance of Religion.* It is not therefore of an indiſpenſable Neceſſity that the generality of Chriſtians ſhould be capable to judge of Verſions. That difficulty, and the like, do not concern them; as the famous and learned Monſieur *Claude* excellently ſhews, in his *Defence of the Reformation*, againſt a Book intituled, *(Prejugez Legitimes,* i. e.) *Warrantable Prejudices*; At *Quevilly*, 1673. Second Part, Chap. 9. p. 195, &c.

" Scripture, *ſaith he*, is the Rule of Faith in two " reſpects; either to form the Faith in the higheſt " degree of Fulneſs and Perfection that Man is capable of in this Life; or meerly to form the Faith " in a degree ſufficient to Salvation. In the firſt reſpect, Scripture is the Rule of Faith, not only by " thoſe Things that it containeth clearly; but, generally, by all that is contain'd therein, whether in " expreſs Terms or in Terms equivalent, or by near " or remote Conſequences; in a word, in any man-

" ner whatsoever. In the other respect, Scripture
" is the Rule of Faith, simply by those Things al-
" sential to Religion which are contained clearly in
" Scripture, and in a manner proportioned to every
" one's Capacity. To make a right and exact use
" of Scripture in the first respect, I grant there are
" many Obstacles and Difficulties to overcome: It
" is necessary to weigh exactly its Terms, to exa-
" mine its Stile, to consider its Arguments, to com-
" pare parallel Places, to inquire diligently into Pas-
" sages that seem contradictory, to penetrate the
" true Sense of obscure and ambiguous Expressions,
" to take heed to the Connexions of the Discourse,
" to the Matter that is treated of, and the Scope of
" him that speaketh. To that end, it is requisite to
" know how to distinguish Apocryphal from Cano-
" nical Books, to understand the Original Languages,
" to judge of the Traductions, and even to consult
" the several Interpreters of Scripture. All this,
" without doubt, requires a great deal of Care, Ap-
" plication and Study; and it is certain, that to ac-
" quit one self well of this, a Man's whole Life is
" not too much. I will add, That it is even too
" little, and that human Strength is too weak to sa-
" thom Scripture, which is an infinite source of My-
" steries and heavenly Truths; wherefore the Author
" of the Preface before the Translation of the New
" Testament, printed at *Mons*, saith well, That *we*
" *have always in Scripture, depths of Knowledge and*
" *Mysteries, which we adore without comprehending them.*
" Nevertheless, it is our Duty to advance in that
" Knowledge, as much as we can, and it would be
" a bad Reason, to dispense our selves from it, to al-
" ledge the tediousness and difficulties of the Work;
" for tho we cannot attain to an absolute Perfection,
" we may make, however, a considerable Progress
" in

" in it; and the more we advance in that ſtudy, the more Joy and Conſolation we thereby reap.

" But as to the ſecond manner, according to which Scripture is the Rule of Faith, namely, to form the Faith ſimply *in a degree ſufficient to Salvation*, by thoſe eſſential Things which are contained clearly in Holy Scripture; in that reſpect, I ſay, the uſe of Scripture is free from all the former tediouſneſs and the above-mentioned difficulties; and is adapted to the Capacity of the meaneſt Perſons, requiring no more than that common Senſe and that common Light of Conſcience which God affords to the leaſt of his Children. Firſt of all, to attain to this degree of Faith, it is not neceſſary that a Man ſtudy the Queſtion of Apocryphal and Canonical Books; for that diſcuſſion, which is neceſſary when we will penetrate as far as the abſtruſe Things of Scripture, which are drawn from thence by remote Conſequences, or by a ſtrict Examination of its Expreſſions and the Courſe of its Arguments, becauſe thoſe particular Things do not bear ſo ſenſible a Character of their Divinity as others: That diſcuſſion, I ſay, which is neceſſary in that caſe, is not ſo when a Man reſtrains himſelf, as Perſons of the meaneſt Capacity do, to the Eſſentials which are taught clearly in Scripture; for thoſe Things palpably appear to be Divine, and conſequently Canonical; which is ſufficient for the certitude of ſuch Mens Faith, if they ſtick to that degree of ſufficiency to Salvation.

" Secondly, They need to conſult neither Original Languages, nor various Readings, becauſe thoſe exact Obſervations which are neceſſary in the uſe of Scripture as to the firſt degree, are not ſo as to the ſecond. Imperfect Verſions contain ſufficiently the clear Points that make the Eſſence of Religion; and various Readings cauſe no altera-

" tion therein. Those Things are neither in one " Passage alone, nor in one only Book; they are so " frequently repeated in the whole Body of Scripture, " that the Translator's Faults, or the difference of Ma- " nuscripts cannot hinder, but that they may there be " discerned. And if sometimes it happens that a Trans- " lator be so partial and so impudent as purposedly and " wilfully to falsify some Place of Scripture, know " are ready to watch to these Things, and will not fail " to warn the People that they may beware of those " Falsifications.

" In fine, it is not necessary that Persons of the " meanest Capacity consult the Interpreters of Scrip- " ture, to assure themselves of its true Sense; for " the Objects of their Faith are so clearly explained " in Scripture, they are there proposed in so many " Places, they are therein so well connected, the one " with the other, and there laid down in a manner " that provides so well for all that is necessary to the " instruction of the Understanding, to the Consolation " of the Conscience, and to the Sanctification of the " Soul, that with the Divine Grace which accompa- " nies the Word, God's People need no more than " that representation of the Objects of their Faith " which the Scripture it self makes, to discern and " apprehend them, and to ground them in their Hearts, " and therein form a right Faith." That undoubtedly is sufficient to Salvation. Therefore all this evidently shews that the *Method of Scripture* is not at all unpracticable.

There is yet another Argument, that may be made use of, to urge the *unpracticableness* of the *Method of Scripture*, which therefore must also be considered; it is this: That no Christian Assembly or Society can be formed, and maintained or kept up with any Order, without *determining* some Passage of Scripture, more than the *latitude* imported by and essential to

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Scripturalism, doth seem to allow? For instance, Protestants cannot form a Religious Society, wherein the Word of God shall be explained, and the Sacraments administred, without *determining*, that those Passages are not to be understood in the Popish Sense, which the Papists esteem to import, That the Pope is the Successour of *St. Peter*, the Vicar of Christ, and Head of the Universal Church on Earth; and consequently that those are not true Sacraments which are consecrated and administred by Men who derive not their Authority from him, nor that a Christian Church which owns him not for the Universal Head. In like manner, suppose a scriptural Society be established, if she useth the Lord's Prayer, or any other Form in her Assemblies, she *determineth* that the use of Forms is lawful; if she use them not, she *determineth* them to be unlawful. Which way soever be *determined*, what becomes of the *Scriptural Latitude*, the free Liberty to every one to judge for himself, and the fit, and rational, *Scriptural way of Union*? It cannot be reduced to Practice, without contradicting its own Principles.

I Answer, The *Method of Scripture* is the propereſt and fitteſt *Method of Union*, as hath been demonstrated by unanswerable Arguments; but yet, as hath also been said, it doth not wholly take away all possibility of Division, it is only the best and most warrantable way to prevent it, or rather the *only Way* agreeable to Reason and *Scripture*. And that it doth not contradict it self, as is pretended in either of the Members of this Argument, will appear if it be considered, that the essence of the *Method* of Union agreeable to *Scripture* consists not in making no Regulations nor Determinations at all, but in making no more Determinations than is absolutely *necessary* to the making up of a *Scriptural Society*. Those that are necessary, are sufficiently justified by their necessity. And they are in

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their own Nature so clear and evident, that they cannot be invisible to any but them that have renounced and pulled out their own Eyes, nor be quarrell'd with but by those who are grossly ignorant, wilful and corruptious; or who make Religion a Party. There is no need of other Determinations. Christian Religion is most rich, and admirable in its native, scriptural simplicity. But, I think, if there were more Determinations than those that are necessary, it doth not follow we must break with a Church that established them, if those Determinations are only concerning indifferent things. And I esteem there are no sincere Scripturalists, (supposing them capable of reasoning and examining) that will expressly assert, that the use of Set-Forms is actually sinful, whatever they may think to be preferable. This is sufficient, with what has been said in the foregoing Chapter, and what shall be added in the Appendix.

As for the other Branch of the Objection, it ought to be no prejudice against the *Method of Scripture*, that it seems *new*, and of many Ages unpractised in the Church: It ought not to seem strange, if it was actually so. For, *Mat.* 24. 29. Our Saviour foretells, that *immediately* after the Destruction of *Jerusalem* the Church should suffer an eclipse, and its brightest Lights should be darkened; tho' for our Comfort, he declared that the Gates of Hell shall not finally prevail against it. And it was not without Example before, that the Church of God was all over-run with Ignorance and Errour. In the time of *Elias*, the true Worshippers were almost invisible. Tho God had reserved a few, the Prophet knew not of any besides himself. And thus, *Revel.* 13. 7, 8. it is said that *it is given* (or permitted) *unto Antichrist to make War with the Saints, and to overcome them, and that Power is given him over all Kindreds, and Tongues, and Nations: And that all who dwell upon the Earth shall worship the Beast.* Papists

pists themselves believe that such an universal degeneracy is sometime to happen in the Church. But for a further Answer, I say,

First, It is sufficient that *Scripturalism* appears the only Method that is agreeable to Reason and to Scripture, as it has been shewn undeniably to be.

Secondly, I add that the *Method of Scripture* visibly appears at least as ancient as the Apostle's Creed, which evidently is expressed in a Latitude agreeable to the *Generality* of Scripture, and therefore is held by the Primitive Church as the *Rule of Faith*, and *a constant and irreformable Rule*, as *Tertullian* and others term it.

Thirdly, It is evident that the *Method of Scripture* is what all our Reformers aimed at, and in their Principles unanimously laid down, as we have shewn out of their Writings. The learned Author of *The sure way to Salvation* had judiciously observed it. His Words upon this Subject, and I may say upon the *Method of Scripture* in general, are excellent and unanswerable. They so exactly speak my sense, that they may well be taken for the Subject of this Discourse (as they gave indeed in a great measure the occasion of it) all that I have said being intended for the confirmation of the *Method* therein proposed. "The *Bible*, "(*saith he, with Emphasis*) the *Bible* is the Religion "of *Protestants*. Whatsoever else they believe besides "it, and the plain, irrefragable, indubitable Conse- "quences of it, well may they hold it as a Matter of "Opinion, but not as a Matter of Faith and Religion; "neither can they with coherence to their own "Grounds believe it themselves, nor require the be- "lief of it of others, without most high and most "schismatical Presumption. I, for my part, after a "long (and as I verily believe and hope) impartial "Search of *the true way to eternal Happiness*, do pro- "fess plainly, that I cannot find any rest for the sole

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of my Foot, but upon this Rock only. I see plainly, and with mine own Eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a Consent of Fathers of one Age against a Consent of Fathers of another Age; the Church of one Age against the Church of another Age; traditive Interpretations of Scripture are pretended, but there are few or none to be found: No Tradition, but only of Scripture, can derive it self from the Fountain, but may be plainly proved, either to have been brought in in such an Age after Christ, or that in such an Age it was not in. In a Word, there is no sufficient certainty but of the Scripture only, for any considering Man to build upon. This therefore, and this only, I have reason to believe; this I will profess, according to this I will live, and for this, if there be occasion, I will not only willingly, but even gladly lose my Life, tho' I should be sorry that Christians should take it from me. I will love no Man the less for differing in Opinion from me, and what Measure I mete to others, I expect from them again: I am fully assured that God doth not, and therefore that Men ought not to require any more than this, To believe the Scripture to be God's Word, to endeavour to find the true Sense of it, and to live according to it.

This is the Religion which I have chosen after a long Deliberation, and I am verily persuaded that I have chosen wisely; for the Scripture being all true, I am secured, by believing nothing else, that I shall believe no Falshood as matter of Faith: And if I mistake the Sense of Scripture, and so fall into Error, yet I am secure from any Danger thereby; because endeavouring to find the true Sense of Scripture, I cannot but hold my Error without pertinacy,

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" and be ready to forſake it, when a more true and " a more probable Senſe ſhall appear unto me.

" If Men inſtead of being *Calviniſts*, *Lutherans*, &c. " would, themſelves, become, and be content that " others ſhould be plain and honeſt *Chriſtians*; if all " Men would believe the *Scripture*, and freeing them- " ſelves from Prejudice and Paſſion, would ſincerely " endeavour to find the true Senſe of it, and live ac- " cording to it, and require no more of others but to " do ſo, not denying their Communion to any that " do ſo; would ſo order their publick Service of " God, that all which do ſo may without Scruple " or Hypocriſy, or Proteſtation againſt any part of " it, joyn with them in it; who doth not ſee that " (ſeeing all neceſſary Truths are plainly and evident- " ly ſet down in Scripture) there would of neceſſity " be among all Men, in all things neceſſary, unity of " Opinion; and notwithſtanding any other differences " that are or could be, unity of Communion, and " Charity, and mutual Toleration? By which means " all Schiſm and Hereſy would be baniſhed the World, " and thoſe wretched Contentions, which now rend " and tear in pieces not the Coat, but the Members " and Bowels of Chriſt, and which mutual Pride and " Tyranny, and Curſing, Killing and Damning, " would fain make immortal, ſhould ſpeedily receive " a moſt bleſſed Cataſtrophe.

" The moſt diſagreeing Proteſtants that are, yet " thus far agree; Firſt, That the Books of Scrip- " ture, which were never doubted of in the Church, " are the undoubted Word of God, and a perfect " Rule of Faith. Secondly, That the Senſe of them " which God intended, whatſoever it is, is certainly " true; ſo that they believe implicitely even thoſe ve- " ry Truths againſt which they err. Thirdly, That " they are to uſe their beſt endeavours to believe the " Scripture in the true Senſe, and to live according

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to it. This if they perform truly and sincerely, " it is impossible but that they should believe aright " in all things necessary to Salvation.

" If by reason of the variety of Tempers, Abilities, Educations, and unavoidable Prejudices, whereby Mens Understandings are variously formed and fashioned, they do embrace several Opinions, whereof some must be erroneous: To say that God will Damn them for such Errours, who are Lovers of him, and Lovers of Truth, is to rob Man of his Comfort, and God of his Goodness; it is to make Man desperate and God a Tyrant.

" It is then sufficient for any Man's Salvation, that he believe the Scripture, that he endeavour to believe it in the true Sense of it as far as concerns his Duty; and that he conform his Life unto it: He that doth so, (and all *Protestants*, according to the *Dictamen* of their Religion, should do so) may be secured that he cannot err fundamentally; so that notwithstanding their differences, the same Heaven may receive them all.

" All the Power in the World is neither fit to convince, nor able to compel a Man's Conscience to consent to any thing. This Presumptuous imposing of the Senses of Men upon the Words of God, the special Senses of Men upon the general Words of God, and laying them upon Mens Consciences together under the equal penalty of Death and Damnation: This vain conceit, that we can speak of the Things of God better than the Words of God; this deifying our own interpretations and tyrannous enforcing them upon others; this restraining of the Word of God from that Latitude and Generality, and the Understandings of Men from that Liberty wherein Christ and the Apostles left them, is, and hath been the only Fountain of all the Schisms of the Church, and that which makes them Immortal;

" ral; the common incendiary of *Chriſtendom*, and " that which (as I ſaid before) tears in pieces not the " Coat, but the Bowels and Members of Chriſt; " *vidente Turcâ, nec dolente Judæo.* Take away theſe " Walls of Separation, and all will quickly be one. " Take away this *Perſecuting*, *Burning*, *Curſing*, " *Damning of Men* for not ſubſcribing to the *Words of* " *Men*, as the Words of God; require of Chriſtians " only to believe Chriſt, and to call no Man Maſter " but him only; let thoſe leave claiming Infallibility, " that have no Title to it; and let them that in their " Words diſclaim it, diſclaim it likewiſe in their Acti- " ons. In a Word, take away Tyranny, which is " the Devil's Inſtrument to ſupport Errors and Su- " perſtitions, and Impieties, in the ſeveral Parts of the " World, which could not otherwiſe long withſtand " the Power of Truth.

" I ſay, take away Tyranny, and reſtore Chriſti- " ans to their juſt and full Liberty of captivating " their Underſtanding to Scripture only: And as " Rivers, when they have a free Paſſage, run all to " the Ocean; ſo it may well be hoped by God's " Bleſſing, that Univerſal Liberty thus moderated, " may quickly reduce *Chriſtendom* to Truth and " Unity." Hitherto Mr. *Chillingworth*.

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CHAP. XXI.

The Answer to the Last Objection.

IT is Objected in the last Place, That the *Method of Scripture* is of no Use, or at least not absolutely necessary. What hath been said, preventing and abundantly refuting this Objection, it only gives us occasion to recapitulate the chiefest Things we have observed of the usefulness and necessity of *Scripture-Method*. Some of our Dissenting Brethren, perhaps, may be apt to think this *Method* of no use, because it doth not necessarily lead Men to some of their Tenets; and they will not think it necessary, because they judge that another Method can best establish their particular Notions, which they would have to be submitted unto by all Men. But I earnestly recommend to them these Considerations, evidencing the usefulness and necessity of our Method.

First, It is only the *Method of Scripture* that delivereth us from all the anxiousness, with which we see so many tormenting themselves about Articles of Religion, and the number of Fundamentals. They must be in perpetual Fear, lest they mistake in any of those Things, wherein they judge the least Errour to be Damnable. But according to our *Method*, if Men truly love and fear God; receive the Scripture as his Word, and sincerely study to know the exact Meaning of it; and if they actually conform their Lives and Actions to what is plain, and what all Christians ever acknowledged is taught there; They may be sure they are safe, and God will love them, howsoever they may unhappily err.

Secondly, It is the *Method of Scripture* alone that can convince Papists of the unreasonableness of all their Impositions, and wholly root up all Persecution and Tyranny, and unchristian Partiality and Injustice. Those Evils are as it were interwoven with, and inseparably mixt into the very being of other Methods; all other Methods, besides that of Scripture, being founded and built upon these Grimes.

From the *Donatists* this mischievous Errour with its consequents is passed to the Church of *Rome*, and from thence afterwards to most Christians, that the Church and Salvation is to be found but in one Party, and that there is no Christianity out of that. Hence they conclude they have a right to make Magisterial Determinations, and enjoyn and require submission thereto, holding it as infallible, that they alone are the Church, and therefore, taking the liberty to do to others what they would think unjust that others should do to them; From which Principles naturally flow all the Tyranny, Violence and Confusion that hath been seen among Christians, to the equal Joy and Wonder of Jews, Turks and Infidels, giving also thereby the Epicurean, more than ever, occasion with Blasphemy to exclaim, *Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum!* As if the Love and Service of God naturally caused Men to render one another Miserable, and to bring upon one another the greatest Evils.

It is too well known what bitter Fruits this cursed Root produceth. Massacring and Burning of Men, in some Countries is called the *Act of Faith*, by way of Excellence. Others that think it not moderate enough to destroy outright, or all at once, esteem it a Mercy to Ruin, and Starve, and Kill by degrees. Some for Differences in Speculation, and sometime for mistaken Differences, and Disputes of Words, set all in an uproar, and will reject the most certain Things

of Religion as insignificant and useless, if all their Determinations be not punctually yielded unto.

They impose upon themselves, as well as upon others; and often they grapple with a Fantom of Heresy, which has no being but in their own Imagination. Very often they oppress the Truth, and fight against God. And if Persecutors ever have Truth of their side, they dishonour it, and retain it in Unrighteousness.

They Fancy they shall go infallibly to Heaven, by the means of a fierce and furious Zeal for the Purity of Doctrin. They Persecute therefore the Heterodox with all the Malice and Cruelty possible, as if they hated the Heretick more than his Errour. And their Zeal without Charity drives them into the greatest Crimes; and in fine, consequently, into Hell. What greater Mischief can any evil Principle cause? they Damn others, and they Damn themselves? But if I believe that all who sincerely fear God are accepted with him, differ they never so much in their Sentiments from me; and if I believe that the Scripture is the perfect Rule of Faith, and that no Man is to judge for another, but that every one is to understand the Scripture for himself, and that all have an undoubted right to the Judgment of Discretion; what room can there be left, upon these Principles when they are exactly followed, for Violence or Constraint? Truly pious Principles then, and truly Christian; which make all Hatred, all Animosity vanish, and restore Peace and good Will among Men!

Thirdly, We have seen manifestly that the *Method of Scripture* is the only Means for the Union of Christians. How useful then would that *Method* be, if in time it produced its natural effect? If thereby *Lutherans, Calvinists*, all *Protestants*, and the generality of Christians were united together! Certainly to reunite into one Communion so many divided Parties, would b

be, the greatest Blessing, the greatest Glory that can be wished to Christians upon Earth. Here is the Way if we will follow it. But if we do not make use of this *Method*, there will be no end of Divisions, there will be no end of Differences, no end of Wrangling. The *Method of Scripture* therefore must needs be necessary, if *Peace* and *Charity are so*. Where there is Tyranny, where there is Division and Contention, there is no Edification, no Peace, no Charity. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not; vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up; doth not behave it self unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no Evil, rejoyceth only in Fidelity and Truth; beareth all Things; believeth all Things; hopeth all Things; endureth all Things: But a Spirit of Partiality and Division is contrary to Charity in all these particulars.

Fourthly, Nothing but the establishment of the *Method of Scripture* will vindicate the Christian Religion from the Objections of Unbelievers, and render it useful to the Conversion and Salvation of Men. Other Methods authorizing or, at least, occasioning Divisions and Dissentions, infinitely weaken the Preaching of the Gospel, scandalize the World, and make Men look on Christianity as on a Thing uncertain, not agreed of by its Professors. Unite, agree among your selves, (will the *Jews*, *Turks* and *Heathens* say,) before you preach to us to embrace your Faith; for we know not with whom of you to join. Take away therefore the many Contradictions that are to be seen among you, before you recommend your Religion to us as Divine, and given by the Revelation of God.

Now the *Method of Scripture* may unite in all things essential all those that will be Christians, and it takes away the Confusion that is occasioned by the Impositions of Men. It shews therefore to Infidels

what they are to believe and profess, and which way they may become universal Christians, namely, by embracing the Holy Scripture as the Word of God, and sincerely studying it and living according to it; so that our *Method* overthrows all the Objections which they can bring against Christianity, and renders them inexcusable if they embrace it not. And it is the *Method of Scripture* alone that (making Vertue and Holiness the Essence and Intendment of Religion) powerfully moves Christians to be righteous and good, and to become a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. We shall never apply our selves successfully to Holiness, nor allow our selves sufficient Time to think in good earnest of our Conversion and the Reformation of our Manners; nor shall we, in fine, ever be actually *Reformed*, 'till we exercise Christian Charity towards one another, make our chief business of the things wherein we agree and which are most obvious to all Men in Scripture, and 'till we follow (in short) our *Method*, and lay the stress upon that chiefly which it establisheth for Terms of Union. But if this be done, then shall Christianity flourish, the *Gospel* shall be *preached to the Poor*; Persons even of the meanest Capacities shall be enamoured with Religion and delighted with Vertue; God then will shower down his Blessings upon us, and Christians shall be the glory of the Earth.

Fifthly. The admitting of the *Method of Scripture* is the only way to clear and adorn the *Protestant* Principles, and make them appear justifiable, rational, and consistent with themselves. *Scripturalism* is the true Reformation. But *Reformation*, without our *Method*, is an unlicked, a disproportioned Thing, a very Monster, a perfect Chymera. If the *Protestant* Principles be good, the *Method of Scripture* must necessarily be received. If Men are not *Papists*, they must be *Scripturalists*; there is no medium. There is

is no *Method* to oppose to that of Popery, but this. All this has been fully demonstrated, by what has been said.

Sixthly, We have likewise seen, that *Scripturalism* is the only *Method* that is agreeable to Reason and Scripture, and that constantly secureth the Truth, so as to make it always possible to be discern'd and profess'd; whereas otherwise it must be perpetually in danger.

Indeed the *Method of Scripture* is not fit to canonize and eternize mere Fancies and Mistakes, and take away the possibility of ever turning them out of Doors. But it is sufficient to all the ends reasonably desirable by those that have the Truth; which it always protects, in as much as it always warrants its consideration, and never in any wise discountenanceth those that discern and imbrace it. The establishing therefore of the *Method of Scripture*, must needs be the doing the greatest good to Men, and advancing in the highest degree the Glory of God.

This *Method* provides best, as we have seen, for the Unity of Religion, and the Peace of the Church: And they that stand to it are ready to reject whatsoever appears contrary to the general Rule of Christians, they are more easily kept within the Bounds of acceptable Worship and all warrantable Obedience, they lay the greatest weight on Things of the greatest worth and moment, they carefully regard all Divine Institutions and whatsoever God has commanded, and they maintain Love and Charity, and mutual forbearance towards one another in the less considerable Diversities of Opinion and Practice. In short, *Scripturalism* is Christianity it self, *as it is proposed to us by God.*

Now, even here, the heavy Wrath and Indignation of God has often fallen upon them that commit Violence, that are Tyrannical, and force the Conscience.

The Persecutors are sometimes persecuted themselves, and wonderful Judgments often attend them. And if spiritual Tyranny and Persecution, and the setting up a Method dishonouring Scripture and dishonouring and endangering the Truth, be, in it self, a heinous Crime, and most abominable before God; it must be much more so, when those are guilty of it who have a considerable Light, and whose Principles tend to, and recommend a quite contrary Method and Temper, *Rev.* 13. 16. *Jam.* 1. 7. *Rev.* 21. 8. *Judg.* 5. 23. *Matth* 8. 38. *Luke* 12. 8, 9. *Luke* 19. 20. *Mat.* 25. 30.

The *Method of Scripture* is so essential to Religion; the observation of Charity (the chief Commandment of the new Law,) the interest of the Truth, and the interest of Conscience are so interwoven with it, and do so much depend upon it, that it is a Point of the highest Consequence; and that can be yielded or parted with upon no account and for no consideration whatsoever. Nor can it be safe (in times of Light) to hold Communion with a Society of Men that are professedly *Antiscripturalists*.

It is not necessary to aggrandise any Thing, relating to that matter which I have offered to the Consideration of all Protestants in this Treatise. Even the meanness of the Performance doth but more visibly shew the excellency and necessity of the *Method of Scripture*, seeing it can appear by the weakest Light. I assure my self it appears, even by what has been said, one of the most weighty Subjects that was ever treated of. And it is to be hoped that the *Method of Scripture* to unite Christians, shall, thro' God's Blessing, be by its own Evidence a Pillar to Truth, that shall last (*vere perennius*) as long as Things shall last; and that this Light will ever increase 'till it shoots its Beams to the ends of the World, so that all the malice of Men and Devils shall never be able to put it out; and in fine, that one day all sincere

Christians

Christians will be actually united by these *Terms*. Then the *Seals* will be *broken*; and the *Book* shall be *opened*! Glory be to God for all that He doth, and will do for our Illumination!

Blessed Lord, who hast caused the Holy Scriptures to be written for our Learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of Thy Holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the Blessed Hope of Everlasting Life, which Thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

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AN APPENDIX TO THE Gospel-Terms OF COMMUNION;

OR,

A Brief Account of the *Scripturalists Profession of Faith*; and the *Articles of Peace*, agreeable to their *Principles*, in order to *Uniformity* in *Publick Assemblies*.

THE *Scripture-Terms of Communion* being a Subject that was never handled before, it could not reasonably be wondered at, if in the treating of it something that might have been said had been omitted. Howbeit, sufficient Reasons have been produced, to shew, invincibly, the *necessity* of that *Method of Union*. Perhaps it is not impossible to raise, still, some *Scruples* against it. But what has been

been said, if it be considered, may serve to resolve all *Difficulties* of this Nature. Nevertheless, designing to give, in short, a View of this *Way to Christian Unity*, that it may be easie for every one to have a clear *Idea* of it, I shall endeavour to make all those Things *plain*, which otherwise might give occasion to new *Objections*.

By *Scripturalists*, or *Scriptural Christians*, I mean those who make the Holy *Scripture* the *Rule* of their *Faith*, and the *Terms* upon which all that profess *Christianity* are to *Unite*: So that the *Method of Scripture* imports the *Method* of taking *Scripture only* for *Terms of Communion*, whether in making a Publick *Profession of Faith*, or establishing *Articles of Peace*; both of which seem to be *necessary* to *Religious Societies*: The former, to give an *Account* of the *general Principles* of their *Religion*, that the World may be able to *judge* what esteem it deserves; and the latter, to fix the things necessary to the *order* of the Assemblies, that Confusion may be avoided. But 'tis of the highest consequence not to lay down as *Professions of Faith*, what ought to be only *Articles of Union*. Otherwise, as it will appear, particular Churches will necessarily exclude one another, and there never will be *Unity*; all Parties being guilty of *Partiality* and *Tyranny*.

In general, 'tis evident, among *Christian Societies* none has *right*, more than another, to make *Determinations*; and, it being certainly every one's Duty to do what lieth in him, that *Christians* may be *United*, it follows that none ought to make any other than most *absolutely necessary* and, consequently, *most comprehensive* Determinations, or Determinations of such a Latitude as to comprehend all those that receive the *general Principles* of *Christianity*, that is, that sincerely embrace the *Gospel*.

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As for *Articles of Peace*, they may be different in different Churches, without any contradiction to their common Principles. It is sufficient that they be consistent with the *Latitude of Scripture*, (to keep the Union of Christians inviolated and intire) as they may be, and yet vary in many Things. Thus particular Churches may allow themselves a great deal of liberty in framing *Articles of Communion*, according to their particular Opinions, without breaking with, or excommunicating any other Church, that keeps to the same *Latitude*, tho' she differ from others in her *Articles*.

But how *widely* soever *Articles of Peace* may *differ* in different Churches, *Professions of Faith* can admit of no *material difference*, allowing of the *Method of Scripture*, and acting *consistently* thereunto. The reason of it will appear, to any one that attentively considers what is imported by *Professions of Faith*, and what by *Articles of Peace* or Union.

Articles of Peace, as every one knows, import, "Articles to which all, for Order and Union sake, "must externally conform unto, if they will live in "the Communion that framed them.

But a *Profession of Faith*, implies *an inward Conviction*, and signifies "a positive Declaration of the "belief of such Truths, without the express profession of which, none can be admitted as a fellow "Member of the same visible Communion.

Now it is certain, that also Christians may, *for the sake of Union and Peace*, yield a *negative Assent* or *outward Conformity* to some *Articles*, even when they think that they are far from being the best and fittest that could be established; none can, with a good Conscience, *profess to believe* what he doth not actually believe; And it is not possible to believe two contrary *Propositions*, but it may be lawful to submit and conform to quite different and contrary *Articles*. There-

fore

fore it is evident that particular Churches, without infringing any part of Christian *Liberty*, and being the *Authors* of *Schism*, may *diversify* their *Terms of Communion* (considered as *Articles of Peace*) and make them *contrary* to those of other Churches, in as much as all sincere and considering Christians, how much soever they may unhappily differ, may yet *accommodate* themselves to all *Articles* of this nature, *framed according* to the *Method of Scripture*: But no Church can, warrantably, make any *material Alteration* (by diminishing from or adding) to the *Profession of Faith* of another Church that keeps to the *Terms of the Gospel*; because, in so doing, she would usurp an *Authority* which none have of *Right*, and would give *occasion to Division*, and be inevitably *guilty of Schism*, tho' she were Orthodox in all her Tenets.

The *Professions of Faith*, then, that any Churches can make, and require a Subscription to, as a Declaration of Faith, in order to the being admitted to their Communion, must be altogether *Scriptural*; that is, actually expressed in the very *Terms of Scripture*. Thus not only no Church will take that *Authority* upon her self which she would think *unjust* in another, but, this way, all the *Evils* of a contrary *Method* will be prevented: For if this be followed, there is no room left for *Animosities* and *Contentions*; the *Truth* cannot be in *danger* to be lost, or ever be oppressed; there is no such thing as *Schism*, but all *Christians* are *United*, and may conscientiously live in each others *Communion*, how vastly soever they *differ* in their particular *Judgments*. For the only Reason why some Christians cannot hold Fellowship with some other Christians, why the Truth is often in Danger, and why there are such Contentions and Animosities, is because Men will not be contented with the *Method of Scripture*, in making *Professions of Faith* and *Articles of Union*; as may be shewn in every particular Case,

and

and in every Point that causeth Division. It follows then, that it is not *lawful* for *Christians*, of any perswasion whatsoever to make any other *Denomination*, than that of *Scripturalists*, but that *all* are *obliged* to follow the Principles of *Scripturalism*.

If any one say, that *Confessions of Faith* in the *Terms of Scripture* are too *ambiguous* and uncertain; we answer, that they are no more so than the *Scripture* it self, which has been given us for the *Rule* of our *Faith*, and is as all *Protestants* hold, a full, perfect and *sufficient* Rule. *Confessions of Faith*, therefore, Catechisms, &c. expresst in *Terms of Scripture* cannot be thought *insufficient* in themselves in any thing that may be esteemed *necessary*. For in all things *necessary* the *Scripture* is *sufficiently clear*; otherwise it should not deserve the name of a *Rule*. And in things *not necessary*, there can be *no necessity* to be *more express* than *Scripture*.

It will perhaps be said, that all *Christians* receive the *Scripture* for their *Rule*, and that nevertheless it is not possible to *hold Communion* with *all* the different Sects of *Christians*. But this is a *Sophism*. For *all Christians* do not receive the *Scripture* for a *sufficient Rule*; and *many* of those that do so in the *Theory*, contradict that Principle by their *Practice*, by their *Determinations* of *unscriptural Professions of Faith* and *Articles of Communion*. Both of which sorts of Christians manifestly act against the *Method of Scripture*, and, *alike*, make *themselves*, and not *Scripture*, to be the *Rule*. It is not at all then strange that we cannot now *hold Communion* with *all* sorts of *Christians*, altho' they *verbally* acknowledg the *Scripture* to be their *Rule*. If in *Deed* and in their *Practice* they owned the *Scripture* as a *perfect* and *sufficient Rule*, no doubt we might all *Unite*. But then all must keep to the *Terms of Scripture* in their *Professions of Faith*; and all *Articles of Union* must be consistent with the *Latitude and generality*

lity of Scripture: Otherwise, as we have observed, *Scripture* is not received as a *sufficient Rule.*

First, I say, *all must keep to the Terms of Scripture, in their Professions of Faith.* They must expressly declare the *Scripture* to be a *Perfect* and *Sufficient,* and therefore their *only Rule.* That is the *Principle* which *Christians* must lay down, if they will *Unite,* and not let the guilt of *Schism* lie at their Door. And this *Principle* being laid, they must *act* according to it. Therefore in all their *Professions of Faith,* to be *made* by every one, and to be *required* of every one, in order to the being admitted as a *Church-member,* they must, as we have said, be content with the *Terms of Scripture.*

Secondly, All Articles of Union must be consistent with the Latitude and Generality of Scripture: That is to say, all *Articles* that all Churches whatsoever may make, to be *Articles of Communion, or Articles of Peace,* must leave room for a free reception of all the *probable Senses* of *Scripture,* without *magisterially* excluding any of them, and thereby incroaching on the *Liberties* of *Christians,* in denying the Fellow-Members of the same Body the *Judgment of Discretion.* If this *Limitation* be but observed, as for the rest, by the *Scripturalists* Principles, Churches have a free scope and liberty allowed them to make what *Articles* they judge best, without being answerable for it but to God, who at the last Day will make a difference betwixt the *Silver and Gold,* and the *Hay and Stubble,* built on the same *Foundation,* by Burning the one, and Extolling the other. But these *Articles* will only import what was the *Judgment* of the *greater number* of the Members of the Society, when the *Articles* were made; but will not imply, as we have observed, that every *one,* who *for Order and Peace sake* accommodates himself to them, esteems them the best that might have been established: Neither is the *intendment* of those *Articles* such

shall it to take away from *Christians* the *freedom* of familiarly *discussing* their *Sentiments*, or even to hinder *Preachers* (when they are to treat of some Points relating to any of the *Articles*) to *represent* fairly the Reasons Pro and Contra of both sides. All the meaning, end, and design of such *Articles*, is that there may be *Uniformity* and *Peace* in the *Publick Assemblies*. So that those that *subscribe* to them, *engage* themselves there not (conscientiously) to *oppose* and contradict them, neither publickly to make a *bustle* with their private Sentiments, (which would cause *scandal*,) but when they represent the Arguments against the side of the Question preferred in the *Articles*, to do in so as not taking *party*, that is, not *deciding* themselves the thing, but wholly *leaving* it to the *Judgment* of others, after they have *impartially* represented it.

You'll say, at this rate, a *Calvinist* will be tolerated in the Communion of the *Arminians*, and an *Arminian* in that of the *Calvinists*; whereas (you think) it would be better that the *Calvinist* should live in the *Calvinist*'s Communion, and that the *Arminian* should retire to the *Arminians*. Why so? This were to *perpetuate Schisms*, which are most fatal Evils.

You'll urge, will not the *Calvinist* think himself in conscience *obliged* to preach *Calvinism*, and the *Arminian Arminianism*; at least, will not the *Arminian* strongly argue for *Arminianism*, and too weakly represent *Calvinism*; and, *vice versa*, the *Calvinist* exalt *Calvinism*, and betray the Cause of the *Arminian*; which would create *confusion*, and shews that such an *Union* is *impossible*? If we compare these *Objections* with what has been said, we shall find that there is no *inconvenience* in those pretended difficulties, that is not remedied by the *Method of Scripture*.

First,

First, then, both the *Calvinist* and *Arminian* may be content to be *silent*, about the Points in debate betwixt 'em, at least in *Religious Assemblies*, or to express them in *Terms of Scripture* or in the *Latitude of Scripture*; and then they shall not have much to say on their *contentious* Controversies. They equally believe that the *Scripture* is *clear* and *sufficient*, as to all things *necessary*. Let 'em, in God's Name, *stick* to that. Neither our *Saviour*, nor His *Apostles* concerned themselves, nor judged the *Christian Religion* to be *concerned* with *metaphysical* Subtilties which surpass an *ordinary* Capacity, nor with the *Disputes* of the *Stoicks* and the *Epicureans*, which were also agitated by the *Sadducees* and *Pharisees*. Christianity is not *arguta Theologia*. It is *Simplicity* it self. It, all, consists in *Piety*, *Righteousness* and *Temperance*. It prefers not *trifles* before the *substance* of *Religion*, and to the *neglect* of that whereby we must be *saved*. *Scripturalists* cannot but *agree* in the *main*. Why, then, should they make it a point of *Conscience* to *divide*; or think themselves *obliged* to insist on their *needless* Differences, to the causing of *Schism*?

Secondly, If either *Arminians* or *Calvinists* must *sometimes* treat of those Points, they are not hindered by the *Method of Scripture*, nor by any *Articles of Peace* agreeable to the *Method of Scripture*; for they have free *liberty* peaceably to *represent* the Reasons of *both Sides*; by which means *Truth* is never in *danger*. If there was but one Man in the World that knew some particular Truth, he might freely represent it by our *Method*. But,

Thirdly, Suppose a *Calvinist*, without due regard to the *Method of Scripture*, did *unfairly* deal with the Opinion he doth not favour, passing by its chiefest Defence, and yet strongly arguing for his private Sentiment: I answer, if the Rules of *Scripturalism* be not kept, *Scripturalists* may first *admonish*, and at last *reject*

and those that break them. *Presbytery*, as has been shewn, are not magisterially to decide in controverted Matters. But they must not be blamed if they lay the utmost that can be said for any Opinion. They are only to blame, if they pass by what is ordinarily said of the other Side. If *Preachers* have not the liberty of impartially stating Things, Truth will ever be in the dark. Truth will be in perpetual danger, and there will be nothing every where but Partiality and Tyranny. But if Things be fairly and calmly argued, there will be true Liberty and Justice, and the Truth cannot then but prevail. Truth having certainly in it self more Evidence than Error.

Lastly, It is evident an obscure and disputable Point may be impartially discussed, without deciding, or so much as asserting any side of the Question. And tho every one is to decide for himself as he sees cause, yet it is not impossible, in Publick, to keep, for Peace sake, to the generality of Scripture. But if it be not thought good that *Preachers* should keep within those Bounds in treating of obscure and controverted Matters, such as may with probability be disputed on both Sides; let it be shewn which is a better Means of Peace and Union than this. For tho' all Christians cannot meet within the same Walls, or in the same Place, yet they are all bound to do what they can for the common Union, that there may be a good understanding between them, and that every one that receives the Word of God for his only Rule, may, with a good Conscience, and without doing any thing against his own Judgment, join, in Religious Worship, with any particular Church, when he please. Therefore there must be some General Terms, such as we plead for, in which Christians may unite.

You'll say, it is not enough to be Scripturalists; Men must take some Party; Christians are obliged to believe and profess the Truth; why else has God revealed

would it; if we say the *Truth* cannot be *discerned*, we accuse God: if it may be *discerned*, those are *wilful* and *obstinate* that will not *discern* it: and therefore they ought not to be *received* into the Communion of them that *have*, and expressly *profess* it.

The second thing then is, That those that have the *Truth* of their side must not content themselves with the *scripturall* Expressions of it, but must so decide, determine and define it, as that it may be *more certain* and *determined* than it is in *Scripture*.

I answer, First, This is the *Method* of the *Papists*, but *Protestants* cannot pretend to make use of it without shamefully deviating from their *principles*.

Secondly, This is the way to multiply *Schisms* *infinitum*; for every one believes it to be that has the *Truth* of his side, and so every one will make his own *Opinion* the Standard of *Truth*, if those that have the *Truth* assume the right *magisterially* to *determine* it, further than it is in *Scripture*. This *Method* then can produce nothing but *Division*; and therefore we can never take it for the *Method* of *Union*. The utmost that can be done, is that if the Preacher of a particular Church be actually of the Sentiments of those who there established *Articles of Peace*, he may have liberty, in that Church, to *assert* that side of the Question which is secured in the *Articles*. For that need cause no *Schism*, (tho there may be some Members, whose *Judgment* in those Particulars doth not agree with that of the greater number of the Congregation;) because the Church-members are not obliged, by the *Articles of Peace*, to believe or profess whatsoever may be contained in the *Articles*, but only not (contentiously) to *contradict* them in the *Publick Assembly*, that there be no *Disputes* and *Confusion* in a Place where all meet for common *Edification*, and not *Religious Wrangles*; and the Preacher is not held

by the Articles to be *infallible*, no more than them who framed the *Articles*. This Liberty may therefore be allowed to the Ministers, tho' indubitably it would be more *equal* and every way more *expedient* that he should content himself, as we said, to report fairly the Reasons of both sides of the Question, and so leave them to the Judgment of the Hearers, without binding them by the *needless* Declaration of his own Opinion; and that *Articles of Peace* should chiefly serve to *regulate* those Things which may be regulated by the *Method of Scripture*, and which are *absolutely necessary* for the *order* of a *Church*; in general Ministers being required to represent only the Reasons of Things, or to express them in *Scripture-Terms*. That way of discussing controverted Matters would be free from all inconvenience, and would be the first to all the ends of a sober Inquiry. It would be much more *edifying* to all Christians, if Ministers in their *Publick Discourses* expressly asserted no other Things, than such as all, who read the *Scriptures* and receive it for the *Rule* of their Faith, acknowledge to be *certain*. And it might be sufficient to assert in *common Conversation*, or in *Print*, those things that are less generally received. However, what liberty soever a Church may please to grant those, who in Publick, will *positively assert* all the things contained in her *Articles of Peace*; it is certain, nevertheless, that she can *impose* them no otherwise than as *Articles of Peace*, and that she can *oblige* none of her Members, on pain of *Excommunication*, to express any Doctrine further than it is expressed in the *Terms of Scripture*; because such *arbitrary* and *unscriptural Impositions* would necessarily be the *cause of Schism*. For those are not the *Schismaticks*, who forsake a Church that makes such *Terms of Communion*, as are inconsistent with the *Judgment of Discretion* and with the *Latitude of Scripture*, but

the Church which makes those *Terms*. Therein lies the *guilt* of *Schism*; from which if we will be *free*, we must necessarily keep to the *Method of Scripture* in our *Professions of Faith* and in our *Articles of Union*, how much soever we may *differ* from other Churches, having as much liberty to differ from them, as they from us, but none of us having the *right* to *exclude* those that will *unite* upon the *Latitude of Scripture*.

Thirdly, It is certain that scriptural *Truths* were *revealed* to the end that all Christians should *study* to understand them to the best of their *power*, and accordingly *profess* them; otherwise, if they fail on their part, they must answer it to Almighty God: But it doth not follow, that in order to *Communion* it is not sufficient to *profess* them in *Scripture-Terms*, or that any Party is more expresly to *determine* them, and has *right* to *require* an express and positive *belief* of such *Determinations* as a *condition* of *Communion*. Men have not the *liberty* to frame *Christian Societies* after their *mode*; *God* has not *left* that to their *humour*; they may not *receive* into, or *exclude* from their *fellowship* whom they *please*, and as they *please*; *Unity* is a *Christian Duty*; and, no doubt, there are some *General Terms*, which all must keep to, in order to *Unity*: And what can those be, but the *Terms of Scripture*? which if we keep to, we are in *charity* and actually hold *Communion* with all that do the same, tho' perhaps we do not happen ever to *meet* together.

Fourthly, It is not only to give occasion to *Schism*, to *require* the positive *belief* of particular *Determinations* as a *condition of Communion*, but it cannot be denied but that it is consequential *Blasphemy*. For it is as much as to say, That *Scripture* (the Dictates of *God*) is *imperfect* and *insufficient*, and That that which *God* has given us to be our *Rule*, is *deficient* and comes short of what it *should* be, to serve for the *end* it was *designed* for; than which nothing can be more *horrid* for *Men* to

It follows, therefore, *that*, as we have said, *Scripture* is sufficiently *certain*, sufficiently *clear*, and every way *sufficient* to all the ends of *Communion*; *That*, then there needs no other *Profession of Faith*, whatever *Articles of Union* may be requisite, and that that must not be made a necessary *Profession of Faith*, which at most can be but an *Article of Peace*, it appearing that these Things are carefully to be *distinguished*; *That* every one must be allowed the *Judgment of Discretion*, one Christian having as much *right* to it as another; *That*, therefore, no *Church* can make such *Terms of Union*, as to *require* any of her *Members*, at any time, to *affirm* any thing, concerning any *controverted* Point, *otherwise* than in *Scripture Words*, without (as Mr. *Chillingworth* speaks) *most high and most schismatical Presumption*; and, consequently, *that* a *Church* which *requires* such an *unjust* Submission and imposes such *partial* Terms, which restrains the *Word of God* from that *Latitude*, and the *Understandings* of Men from that *Liberty* wherein *Christ* and the *Apostles* left them, and in short which is not content with a *scriptural Profession of Faith*, but *rejects* that as *insufficient*, and *demands a positive* Belief and *inward* Approbation of *her own Words* and her own *Interpretation* and *Determination*, must be look'd upon, both, as a *Presumptuous* and *Tyrannical* Church, which *abandons* and *vilifies* the *Word of God* and the *Method of Scripture*, which thereby gives occasion to *Confusion*, *Scandal* and *Schism*, and which, therefore, must necessarily, her self, be *abandoned* and *rejected* as *Schismatical*, yea, tho', otherwise, all her imposed *Definitions* (except the *Assertion* of her *pretended* and false *Authority*) and all her other *Interpretations* were exactly true.

Indeed, a *Church* may word the *Submission* to her *Articles of Peace* as she pleaseth, so by those *Words* she only *means* and require an *outward Submission* and Compliance to such *Articles* as *Articles of Union*, made only

only, to the end that there may be *Order* in the *Assemblies*. And that is, as the *Divines* of the *Church of* England explain it, the *meaning* and design of that *Church*, in the imposition of her *Articles*, which so far seem *innocent* and consistent with the *Method of Scripture*.

Thus it appears how those that differ in *Speculations*, may nevertheless *unite*. It may seem more difficult for them to *hold Communion*, one with another, who differ in Points of *Practice*. For, suppose a considerable number of *Anabaptists*, of *Sabbatarians*, and of the Christians of the *Greek Church* be, for instance, at *Constantinople*, and hold, all, the Principles of the *Scripturalists*: It will be ask'd, How they can *unite*, considering their *Differences*? I answer, It is not absolutely necessary they should always *meet* under the same Roof. The *Sabbatarians* are no more bound to go to the *Anabaptists* than the *Anabaptists* to the *Sabbatarians*, or either of them to the *Greeks* than the *Greeks* to them. But yet all of them are obliged, by the *Method of Scripture*, so to order and dispose their *Articles of Union*, as that, with a safe Conscience, they may *join* together in the same *Publick Worship*; that is, that the *Sabbatarians* or *Anabaptists* may, if they please, go to the *Grecians* or the *Grecians* to them, nothing being established, by any of them, in the *Publick Assemblies*, inconsistent with the *Judgment of Discretion* of any one that receives the *Scripture* for his *Rule*. That is what the *Gospel-Terms of Communion* indispensably require of every *particular Church*, that she may do her *part* in keeping up the *Unity of Christians*, and that she may be *free* from the *guilt* of *Schism*.

The *Grecians* are not *Schismaticks*, tho' they never go, so much as once, to the *Congregation* of the *Anabaptists* or *Sabbatarians*. They are under no indispensable Obligation to that, altho' they were, all, *Scripturalists*,

turalists. But the *Grecians* are infallibly *guilty* of *Schism*, if they so frame their *Articles of Union*, as that the *Sabbatarian* or *Anabaptist* cannot, if they would, join in *Religious Fellowship* with them, without doing something against their own *Judgment*, and being obliged to comply to some *Practice* contrary to the *Latitude of Scripture*, for that which is so, is contrary to the *Gospel Terms of Communion* and the *Method* of *Scripturalists*; therefore the *Grecians* are not *Scripturalists*, if they establish any such *unscriptural* Terms: And, if what we call the *Method of Scripture* be really the only *Method of Union* agreeable to *Scripture*, it is evident those that do not follow it are *Schismaticks*. If any say this *Method* is not that of the *Scripture*, or that which is intended in the *Gospel*, let them shew that, then, which is so, and is to be followed by *Christians* to be *free* from *Schism*. There are but Two: *Ours*, and *that of the Papists*.

But, you'll say, suppose *Ours* to be the only *Method of Union*, yet how can it be *practicable*, leaving to every one his *Judgment of Discretion*? The *Sabbatarians* believe that it is necessary to keep holy the seventh Day of the Week. The *Anabaptists* will have none to be Baptized but Adult Persons. The *Grecians* do not allow Blood to be Eaten, they Pray for the Dead, &c. How can all these be *Scripturalists*, and *hold Communion* one with another? I answer, 'tis evident by what has been said, the *Grecians*, *Anabaptists*, *Sabbatarians*, &c. cannot be *Scripturalists*, if they restrain and *determine*, in their *Terms of Communion*, the *Latitude of Scripture*, every one to their *particular* Sense; so that one who, holding *Scripture* for his *only Rule*, would live in *Communion* with either of them, cannot do so, without doing something against his *Judgment*. Therefore 'tis necessary (if they will be *Scripturalists*) *that* they leave the *Word of God* in that *Latitude*, and the *Understandings of Men* in that *Liber-*

ty,

it, wherein *Christ* and the *Apostles* left them; consequently, *that* they do not make those Things *Terms of Communion*, which others might think they should sin if they practised or complied to them, and *that* they do not, by any means, *condemn* those who differ in their Judgment from them, but *that* they *tolerate* every one who receives the Word of God for his only Rule, and *that* they look on such a one as a fellow-Christian, and as one of their Body, notwithstanding all Differences whatsoever, joyning with him if he will joyn with them so far as they are agreed: Then, (these Things being observed) they are *free* from the *guilt* of *Schism*, and may be reckoned to *live in Unity*, and to *hold Communion* one with another, tho' they be never so far from one another, and never happen to *meet* together.

The *Anabaptists*, therefore, may baptize Adult Persons; but, if they will keep to the *Method of Scripture*, they must not, by their *Terms*, *reject* from their Communion those that Baptize Infants, and would think it a *Sin* for them not to do it.

They need not abstain from Blood, if they take not the Eating of it to be unlawful; but they must not only *not condemn* those that are scrupulous in that Case, but even take care not to *scandalize* them, nor put a *stumbling-Block*, or an *occasion to fall* in their Brother's way. Likewise, those that make a scruple to eat Blood, may abstain from it; but must not make that a part of their *Terms of Union*; for *to his own Master every one standeth or falleth*. This Point has no difficulty; for it has no relation with the *Order* of the *Assemblies*, therefore it may be ranked with the *speculative* Matters.

As for Praying for the Dead, they that think it a Duty, may do it without opposing the *Method* of taking *Scripture only* for the *Means of Union*, or the *Method of Union* taught in *Scripture*; but then they must per-

form these sorts of Devotion in private, because many who receive the *Scripture* for their *Rule*, would think it a *Sin* to *join* with 'em therein.

But as for the *Sabbatarians*, tho' they are not to *condemn* those that keep not the Seventh-Day as they do, yet they may make the keeping of it part of their *Terms of Union*, without contradicting the *Method of Scripture*; for there is no Man that can desire to be admitted into their Communion, but may with a good Conscience *comply* with them in that particular, so they do not require him to profess that it is absolutely necessary, but be content with an external *compliance* to it, as to an *Article of Peace*. Christians are bound to *comply* with one another in such Cases, for *Peace* and *Union* sake, when they *meet* in the same *Assembly*, or in the *Assemblies* one of another. If any one, that would *join* with them, refrain'd from it merely upon that (or the like) account, it were *Scandal taken*, and the *Sabbatarians* were not answerable for it; since there is nothing therein contrary to the *Latitude of Scripture*.

This is the *Scriptural way of Union*, notwithstanding Differences of Judgment, in Points concerning *Practice*. Which shews that the *Method* of the *Scripturalists* is not *impracticable*. But if any one further contends, I fix, in short, to this. That this is the most comprehensive *Method*, the fittest for the *General Union of Christians*, that which is the most agreeable to *Scripture*, to *Reason* and *Justice*, and that, consequently, which is to be followed by all that receive the *Scripture* for the *Rule* of their Faith, and will not be answerable for the Divisions and Animosities that tear in pieces the Christian Church. All *Articles of Peace* therefore, as I said, must be consistent with the *Latitude of Scripture*, and not *exclude* any that make use of their Judgment. We must allow to others as much *Liberty* as we take our selves; and at the same time

none

none must surpass those *general Bounds*; which if exceeded, the *Union* of differing Christians is dissolved, and thereby *Schism* caused.

As for the *Profession of Faith*, necessary to be admitted into the Communion of the *Universal Church*; it may be made (as it is in the *Church of England*) by *reciting the Apostles Creed*, which is the *summary* of Christian Faith, and standing up at the reading of the Gospel; or by such a *form* as this: "I do not only believe concerning God, and religious Duties, what is taught all Men, by the Light "of Nature, Reason and Conscience; but I likewise "firmly believe the Confirmation which God has given to Natural Religion, by Revelation: I solemnly hold and profess that the Canonical Books of "the Old and New Testament are a sufficient Rule "of Religion, and I take them for a perfect Rule of "Faith and Manners: I will do what lieth in me, in "my Circumstances, to have a right Understanding "of them, and to discern all Truths there, for the "bettering of my Soul by them, and rendering an acceptable Service to God, my Creator, Redeemer "and Sanctifier: I not only assent in general to all "that is said in those sacred Books, but am ready to "subscribe in particular to any Point or Article of "Christianity, contained in the Words of Scripture: "I esteem every one as a fellow-member of the same "Body, that makes the same Profession, and that "receives me as I receive him, not condemning me for "my particular Judgment and Understanding of Scripture, no more than I condemn him for his; and I "hold Communion with him, if he will hold Communion with me, as far as we agree, in the generality of Scripture. This is my Profession of Faith, "in general; and, in particular, I profess, I believe "in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and "Earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,

"who

" who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, Born of " the Virgin *Mary*, ſuffered under *Pontius Pilate*, was " Crucified, Dead and Buried; he deſcended into " Hell, the third Day he roſe again from the Dead, " he aſcended into Heaven, and ſitteth on the right " Hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence " he ſhall come to judge the Quick and the Dead. I " believe in the Holy Ghoſt; the Holy Catholick " Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgive- " neſs of Sins; the Reſurrection of the Body, and " the Life everlaſting. *Amen.*

This is the *Method of Union* according to *Scripture*, and the *general Principles* that ought to be *profeſſed* by every one, in order to his being admitted into the external *Communion* of the viſible *Church* of Chriſt, and conſequently into that of particular *Churches*. And now, in this *Appendix*, we have made the full Application of all that was ſaid in the Treatiſe of the *Method of Scripture*; and that Method, I hope, appears ſo plain to every one's Underſtanding, that it cannot be miſunderſtood by any who are ſincere, nor be any more contradicted in Practice by thoſe who have a true Zeal for the Peace and Union of Chriſtians; or who, in earneſt, receive the *Scripture* for their *Rule*.

SOME

SOME QUERIES OF THE *Scripturalists*, (OR Of them that keep to the Proteſtant Principles, actually holding the *Holy Scripture* for a perfect Rule of Faith and Practice,) to thoſe that laying no Claim to Infallibility, yet are not for Toleration in the ſame Communion.

WHAT Right can you have (if you conſider it) Magiſterially to demand a Declaration of the particular Sentiments of others, or to perſecute them, and exclude them out of the Chriſtian Society, for underſtanding Scripture in the ſenſe which ſeems to them the moſt probable; when you deny that *Right* to the Church of *Rome*, and vehemently reprove the Popiſh *Inquiſition*?

If any of us (that is, any *Scripturaliſts*, or any that actually keep to the Proteſtant Principles, in holding the Holy *Scripture* for a ſufficient and perfect

perfect Rule) have particular Sentiments, how can you ſo much find fault with it as you do, when your Principles are, That your ſelves are not infallible, and that the Judgment of Diſcretion ought freely and inviolably to be allowed to all?

When we receive the *Scripture* for our Rule and are ready to ſubſcribe every word in it, how can you refuſe us your right Hand of Fellowſhip, ſeeing you alſo acknowledge the ſame Scripture for your Rule?

What Grounds have ye then to require of us to ſubſcribe any thing beſide *Scripture*, (a few neceſſary Articles of Peace being agreed upon, or Articles that admit of a Latitude, without any Human Determinations and Unjuſt Impoſitions,) when you hold theſe Principles, *That* Scripture is the Rule of Chriſtians, *That* God hath appointed no living *Judge of Controverſies* upon Earth, and, conſequently, that no Man ought to impoſe upon another his Interpretation, as if it was *the Text it ſelf of Scripture?*

If you impoſe upon us any thing beſide *Scripture*, it is your Interpretation of Scripture; and if you impoſe your Interpretation on us, do you not make your ſelves the *Judges of Controverſies*, &c.?

How can you *Magiſterially condemn* our Interpretation of Scripture, without ſetting your ſelves up for the *Judges of Controverſies*, and Magiſterially deciding, determining, and impoſing *your Interpretation?* And if you are not infallible, and if Chriſtians are carefully to *examine all things*, how, conſiſtently, and upon what Grounds can any be forbidden to *profeſs* freely his Sentiments, as your ſelves think it juſt and neceſſary to profeſs your own, and ſhew the Reaſons you think you have for them?

Is

Is not that a monſtrous Abſurdity, as well as a tyrannical Oppreſſion, to go about to force Mens Sentiments from them, and at the ſame time to be angry at them for profeſſing their Sentiments?

When you eſteem that any thing is impoſed upon you, and that you are perſecuted, do you not ſay, That that is (abſolutely) Popery? Are you not then Partial, when (by your own acknowledgment) you entertain a Will and Deſire to deal with other Men, as you would not be dealt with, your ſelves; and allow in your ſelves what you condemn in others?

FINIS.